

LITERARY CRITICISM IN ANTIQUITY

VOLUME II
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LITERARY CRITICISM IN ANTIQUITY

A SKETCH OF ITS DEVELOPMENT

by

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PREFACE

IN accordance with the plan already sketched, those varied critical activities at Rome which belong roughly to the first century B.C. and the century following now come under review; and this second stage of the critical development in antiquity forms the subject of the present volume. To that critical output Greek as well as Roman writers contributed, and, for a just appreciation of their work, contemporary conditions and problems must be taken into account. An attempt has therefore been made to view the various performances against their historical background; and the resulting conclusions, it is hoped, are not without their interest. In the first place, the narrative in broad outline will be found to treat of the establishment of the classical tradition in literature; and, secondly, certain fresh views are submitted concerning several of the writers, and more particularly of Horace, Tacitus, "Longinus", and Quintilian. As before, much of the theorising is concerned with oratory and prose style, though poetry as well comes in for some amount of treatment. Altogether the period is one of considerable interest for modern readers, and not least on account of the modern tendencies which already become visible.

Concerning my indebtedness to earlier and present-day scholars I have already written; it now remains to acknowledge with gratitude further obligations incurred in writing this present volume. First and foremost come my debts to the late Professors Saintsbury and W. Rhys Roberts, to whom much of the foundation work in connection with this period is undoubtedly due. The one by reason of his great erudition, the other by his humane and scholarly interpretation of several of the critics, prepared the way for those who were to follow, and rendered possible some such treatment as is now being attempted. To other earlier scholars, again, I am indebted for help in treating of individual writers: to Professor A. S. Wilkins and Sir J. E. Sandys for assistance in my reading of Cicero, to

Professor Sir R. C. Jebb for light on the work of Dionysius of Halicarnassus; while to Drs A. Rostagni and C. Jensen, among foreign scholars, I owe not a little by reason of their work on Horace. From the more general treatment of the subject in such works as Mr E. E. Sikes's *Roman Poetry*, Mons. R. Pichon's *Histoire de la littérature latine*, and Rev. J. F. D'Alton's *Roman Literary Theory and Criticism* I have also derived valuable assistance, as well as from other sources which I have endeavoured to indicate by means of foot-notes. Nor, in conclusion, must I fail to record my obligations to various editors of the Loeb Classical Library, to Sir William Peterson, Professor H. E. Butler, and others. "It is the interpretation of what is already partially known that must always be the scholar's task"; so wrote one who was himself a distinguished Greek scholar. And to that task of scholarship—especially valuable nowadays in relation to the classics—the Loeb Classical Library has contributed in no slight degree.

J. W. H. A.

Aberystwyth

June 1934

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CHAPTER I

THE CRITICAL BEGINNINGS AT ROME AND THE CLASSICAL REACTION: TERENCE, LUCILIUS, AND CICERO¹

WITH the beginning of the first century B.C. the centre of critical activities shifted over from Alexandria to Rome; and Rome from now on became the trustee of that earlier civilisation which had flourished first at Athens and then in the scattered centres of Hellenistic life. By this time Rome had become mistress of the whole of the Mediterranean world. The fall of Corinth in the same year as that of Carthage (146 B.C.) had witnessed to her conquests in both East and West alike; and in the course of the second century B.C. she had overrun Macedonia (200-168 B.C.), had reduced Greece to a Roman province (146 B.C.), and, taking over Pergamum from Attalus III, had transformed it into the province of Asia (132 B.C.). Alexandria for the time being retained its independence, though declining in productive force; but before the end of the next century, after the battle of Actium (31 B.C.), Egypt including Alexandria had also fallen, and Rome stood supreme in a new Graeco-Roman world. Nor were these achievements unaccompanied by developments in the intellectual life of Rome. From the third century B.C. onwards Rome was being imbued with Greek culture and art, and this before the period of direct contact and conquest. The earlier phase of the Hellenising movement was due to the Greek provinces of Italy. It was from thence that Romans first learnt of the Greek literary masterpieces; and it was upon the models of the classical epoch, not upon the contemporary productions

¹ *Texts and Translations*. TERENCE: ed. (with trans.) J. Sargeant, 2 vols. (Loeb Cl. Lib.), 1912; ed. R. Kauer and W. M. Lindsay, Oxford, 1926; trans. H. T. Riley (Bohn Lib.), 1853. LUCILIUS: *C. Lucilii Carminum Reliquiae*, ed. F. Marx, 2 vols. Leipzig, 1904-5. CICERO: *De Oratore*, ed. A. S. Wilkins, 3 vols. Oxford, 1888-92; *Orator*, ed. J. E. Sandys, Cambridge, 1885; *Brutus*, ed. M. Kellogg, Boston, 1889; *De Oratore, Orator, Brutus*, ed. (with trans.) C. Stuttaford (Loeb Cl. Lib.); J. S. Watson, *Cicero's Oratory and Orators* (trans. of *De Oratore* and *Brutus*) (Bohn Lib.), 1903.

of the Hellenistic world, that the Romans mainly drew in making their earliest ventures in the literary sphere. Thus to the third century B.C. and the century following belong the works of Andronicus, Pacuvius, and Accius, consisting of epics and tragedies mainly based on the works of the classical Greeks. In the second century B.C. were also written the comedies of Plautus and Terence; and in them the vernacular was moulded to a literary form and was made to beat out rhythms and measures that were new to Rome. But, while the first effects of Greek influence at Rome are thus seen in the founding of her literature, it was due to the more intimate relations with the Hellenic world in the second century B.C. and later that the Hellenising process spread to all departments of life and thought, and that Rome became finally penetrated with Greek learning and traditions. From the first the Roman genius betrayed a marvellous faculty of assimilation; and after the destruction of Corinth, Rome was filled with the treasures of Greek art. She was invaded for instance from all quarters by lettered Greeks; Greek works were translated and Greek libraries founded; Roman armies and merchants moreover went East and returned with new ideas and traditions, all of which reacted on Roman life. And in the intellectual sphere the new influences were specially felt, owing to the zeal of a number of patrons, including the younger Scipio. It was in vain that the elder Cato tried to stem the tide; the inrush of Greek ideas proved irresistible and lasting, and this was in some measure due to the channels through which Greek learning reached Rome. Among the heralds of Greek culture were some of the most eminent teachers of the age, who had journeyed to Rome in various capacities. When for instance in 165 B.C. Crates of Mallos lectured at Rome on Greek grammar and philology, he was the first to introduce the study of literature and possibly of Homer; and two years later he was followed by Polybius who came as one of a thousand hostages to Rome, and who remained to become a friend of Scipio and to adopt Rome as "his second country". Then in 155 B.C., as ambassadors from Athens, came a group of philosophers who profoundly interested Roman youth; they were the Academic Carneades, the Peri-

patetic Critolaus, and the Stoic Diogenes. And, in their train, in 146 B.C. came the Stoic Panaetius (189-111 B.C.) who, as an inmate of the household of Scipio Aemilianus, exercised a lasting influence on contemporary thought. Nor was the Hellenising process confined to the great days of the Republic; throughout the first century B.C. the work of transmission went on, and Greek culture filtered through from all sides without check or hindrance. Among the most pervasive influences of the age was that of Posidonius (138-45 B.C.) who visited Rome during the last consulship of Marius, and again in 51 B.C. A pupil of Panaetius, and one nourished on all the learning of the schools of Asia, he exercised at Rome considerable influence and inspired many of the serious Roman writings of his own and the following age. And in the meantime new methods of acquiring Greek culture were being adopted. By now it had become the fashion for young Romans to complete their education abroad; and Athens and Rhodes (an offshoot of Pergamum) were among the favourite centres, the latter being visited by Cicero (in 78 B.C.) for the study of rhetoric. Then, too, the new learning poured in from the Greek libraries which were now accessible. Cicero for one in his various treatises shows an acquaintance with most of the ancient writers; and it was now in all probability that the Aristotelian MSS. again saw the light, being brought to Rome after the capture of Athens (86 B.C.). Thus from Athens and from all the Hellenistic centres came contributions to the Hellenisation of Rome; so that many of the intellectual activities which had been characteristic of Greece found in due course their place in the Roman world. If Pergamum and Rhodes were on the whole the most effective intermediaries between Hellenism and Rome, it must further be added that Athens, Alexandria, and the rest, also played their part, the influence of Alexandria being more especially felt towards the end of the first century B.C. And as a result of it all Rome took her place in the world of culture as a member of the Hellenic fellowship, the agent destined to transmit to later ages the message and methods of the Greeks. From Greece she had received the elements of her culture, her new ideals and ways of life, her

philosophy, her politics, her art, as well as a scholarship that was Greek in origin, methods and ideas. And Rome took up the development where Athens and Alexandria had left off, adapting to her own uses the wisdom of the past, and modifying by her genius the traditional culture of Greece. In all departments of thought the transforming process is seen at work, and in none more clearly than in the field of literature. "Rome", it has been said, "built the bridge over which many of the best thoughts of antiquity found their way into the modern world"; and this, with some reservations, is true of literary criticism, and of those theories of poetry and rhetoric first propounded by the Greeks.

It is therefore with these activities at Rome, which represented at this stage the main line of critical development, that our narrative from now on will be mainly concerned. And for the actual beginnings we must turn to the second century B.C., to that period contemporaneous with the Hellenistic activities already mentioned, which were not without their influence on the earliest Roman criticism. By the middle of that century Latin literature, as we have seen, had made a successful beginning. The elder Cato (234-149 B.C.) had indeed classed poets with *grassatores* or foot-pads; but in the meantime things had undergone a change. A devotion to art was no longer held to be inconsistent with Roman *gravitas*; and by this time the foundations of a national poetry had been successfully laid. Nor were there lacking developments in prose and particularly in oratory. After Cato had come the two Gracchi (second century B.C.), then Crassus (140-91 B.C.) and M. Antonius (143-87 B.C.), whose work marked a development of technique, and an increasing appreciation of rhetorical artifice. Hence the gradual establishment of a native literary tradition, an awakening to a sense of the possibilities of art; and these things found expression in some amount of critical interest and activity.

Among its earliest manifestations were sporadic comments on poetry arising mainly out of the literary conditions of the age; and not least interesting in this connexion are the remarks on drama by Plautus and Terence. In the plays of Plautus (c. 254-184 B.C.), for instance, will be found casual comments

on the current defects in comedy¹; the extravagances indulged in by conventional stage-lovers,² the fondness for placing the scene at Athens,³ and the monotonous recurrence of stock characters, such as the *leno periurus*, *meretrix mala* and *miles gloriosus*.⁴ To this Plautus adds at least one significant comment on theoretical matters, where he seems to have in mind the dramatic *genres* and their normal characteristics. As if conscious that the *Amphitruo* did not conform with the laws of comedy, which required a treatment of everyday characters and episodes,⁵ he presents his apology for that work as a tragic-comedy, since heroic characters, proper to tragedy, had been introduced into the play.⁶ Of yet greater interest are the occasional comments of Terence (c. 192-159 B.C.), whose contribution is of a more substantial kind.⁷ From the first he seems to have been subjected to attacks from envious rivals, Luscius Lanuvinus and others, identified possibly with the guild of poets (*collegium poetarum*); and not a few of his critical remarks embodied in his Prologues are of the nature of replies to their detractions. Among the charges brought against him was first the suggestion that he owed his success more to the assistance of friends in the Scipionic circle than to his own genius.⁸ And this insinuation, the outcome largely of professional jealousy, Terence treats with the contempt and silence it deserved. The other charges relating to his free handling of his material⁹ and his poverty of style¹⁰ receive from him more serious consideration. By way of reply he submits a damaging criticism of his opponents' work, thereby indicating defects in contemporary comedy; and, what is more, he also puts forward a defence of his own methods, including his views on the nature of comedy and its technique.

Chief among the charges in Terence's indictment were the pedantic and uninspired methods of his rivals. Their comedies, he maintained, were nothing more than literal translations of

¹ The fact that some of the Prologues are only semi-Plautine does not lessen their value in literary history. ² *Mercator*, 3. ³ *Menæchmi*, 7.

⁴ *Captivus*, 57-8.

⁵ See vol. 1, 159.

⁶ *Amphitruo*, 58ff.

⁷ For useful accounts see G. Norwood, *The Art of Terence*, pp. 137-9 and J. F. D'Alton, *Roman Literary Theory and Criticism*, pp. 7-27.

⁸ *Heaut.* 23-1.

⁹ *Ibid.* 16-17; *Eun.* 19-16.

¹⁰ *Phormio*, 1 ff.

Greek originals, turned moreover into bad Latin.¹ Aiming at a meticulous accuracy, he added, they frequently stumbled into sheer obscurity; and he censures in unsparing terms their *obscura diligentia*, preferring, as he puts it, the *neglegentia* of others.² Apart from this he found in their comedies traces of bad taste, as well as episodes unsuitable for comedy. In one place, for instance, he points out a breach of decorum, a scene of rowdiness, in which a slave is allowed to hustle his betters;³ elsewhere he derides a legal blunder, in which a law-suit is opened by the defendant instead of by the plaintiff.⁴ But most significant of all is his attack on the use made of sensational and pathetic incidents. He recalls a passage, possibly in a play by Lanuvinus, in which a youth described how a hind pursued by hounds implored him for assistance;⁵ and such scenes he condemns as fantastic and outside the province of comedy. That episodes of this kind appealed to the taste of contemporary audiences can scarcely be doubted; and Terence alludes more than once to the crudity of play-goers with their weakness for rope-dancing, boxing, and the like.⁶ Yet such considerations he regards as no excuse for lapses of taste on the part of dramatists; and the far-fetched and sensational formed no part of his conception of comedy.

At the same time Terence's criticism is not wholly of a negative and destructive kind. From remarks here and there in defence of his own work may be gathered material that goes to form something like a coherent theory, in which he reveals some of the principles underlying his art as a comic poet. That he regarded himself as to some extent an innovator, an exponent of new methods in comedy, is suggested by his claim that he presented "new plays free from flaws" (*novae sine vitis*).⁷ And whereas his standards, as we have seen, were not determined by the populace, neither were they controlled by the views of the reigning authorities. In one place, indeed, he makes an appeal that the dramatic art should not be allowed to "fall into the hands of the few" (*recidere ad paucos*);⁸ and it is evident

¹ *Eun.* 7-8.² *Andria*, 20-1.³ *Heaut.* 31-4.⁴ *Fim.* 10 ff.⁵ *Phormio*, 6-8.⁶ *Hecyra*, 4 ff., 33-42; cf. also *Hor. Ep.* II, I, 182 ff.⁷ *Heaut.* 29-30.⁸ *Hec.* 47.

that what he has in mind is a reform of contemporary comedy and its establishment on sound lines. Concerning his conception of comedy in general some idea may perhaps be formed from his exclusion of extravagant and emotional episodes already mentioned. Here, like Plautus, he conceives of comedy as a *genre* distinct from tragedy; as moving exclusively along the levels of ordinary life, and eschewing all that was heroic or pathetic in character. In this he would be adopting the traditional theory; and it is not altogether fanciful to detect a reminiscence of that theory in the passage where Demea speaks of directing his son "to look into the lives of men, as it were in a mirror, and to take from them an example" (*inspicere tamquam in speculum in vitas omnium*, etc.).¹

Yet more definite are the views he puts forward with regard to the best form of comedy, and the methods of composition. In the first place he declares against the boisterous farce (*fabula motoria*) with its noisy action, and states his preference for a quiet play (*fabula stataria*),² which depended for its effects on things other than liveliness of action, and which was characterised as well by simplicity and purity of style (*oratio pura*).³ Then too he is no longer content with the stock characters associated with comedy, such as for instance the bustling slave (*servos currens*), the angry old man (*senex iratus*), the gluttonous parasite (*parasitus edax*), the impudent cheat (*sycophanta impudens*), and the greedy procurer (*leno avarus*).⁴ Nor was it merely that such characters were noisy and farcical. Their use also imposed limitations on the dramatist's treatment; and Terence more than once implies that greater freedom was necessary. Thus Gnatho's claim that he had invented a more subtle type of parasite is not without its significance.⁵ Nor again is it for nothing that certain characters elsewhere are gifted with secrecy, a quality, it is explained, that was new in

¹ *Adelphi*, 415; cf. Cicero's definition of comedy, *imitatio vitae, speculum consuetudinis*, see p. 38 *infra*; also A. P. McMahon, *Harv. Stud. in Class. Phil.* XL, 119.

² *Heaut.* 36.

³ *Ibid.* 46.

⁴ *Ibid.* 37 ff.; for further types, the virtuous matron (*matrona bona*), the boastful soldier (*miles gloriosus*), the wicked courtesan (*meretrix mala*), the changeling (*puer suppositus*), see *Eun.* 247 ff.

⁵ *Eun.* 247.

comedy, where everything was known to everybody (*in comediis omnia omnes resciscunt*).¹ And, if further evidence were needed as to the views of Terence on this matter, there is the sympathetic portrait of Bacchis as drawn in *Hecyra*, a *meretrix bona*, as later critics described her.² Equally interesting, however, is the innovation he commends in the matter of the Prologue. That device had been employed by Euripides for revealing to his audience the outlines of his plot; and Plautus, where he introduces a Prologue, still makes use of it for much the same purpose. From the first, however, Terence broke away from this tradition of exposition, and employed his Prologues to other ends. For one thing he aimed at placating his audiences by appeals to their good-will (*orator...non prologus*);³ but more generally he uses it for polemical purposes, for replying to hostile critics, and for discussing matters of art—a procedure in which he was followed by Ben Jonson. And the true significance of this change lies in his reasons for its adoption. They were reasons, it should be noted, of an artistic kind; for it was not opportunities for polemics that Terence had primarily in mind, but rather the discarding of the prologue of exposition as being essentially inartistic. In one place he explains that the business of exposition was by him performed in the opening scenes of the play itself, partly by narrative, and partly by action.⁴ And this in short was what he advocated; the essence of his innovation being the rejection of an undramatic device for new and more subtle dramatic methods. To Shakespeare, it might be added, the same problem presented itself at the outset of his career; and his solution is the same as that of Terence. He too dispenses with the aid of the undramatic prologue, and relies solely on the dramatic exposition of his opening scenes.

So far then it would seem that the main trend of Terence's criticism was in the direction of increasing freedom in matters of dramatic characterisation and plotting. And this tendency is likewise seen in what he has to say concerning the dramatist's handling of his originals, those Greek plays from which con-

¹ *Hec.* 866.

² See D'Alton, *op. cit.* p. 21 n.

³ *Hecut.* 11.

⁴ *Adelphi*, 23-4: *senes qui primi venient, i partem aperient [sc. narrando], agendo partem ostendent.*

temporary dramatists were wont to draw their material. The question was one of urgency at the time; and Lanuvinus and his school, in the first place, stood for literal translation (*bene vortendo*),¹ and for a close adherence to the idiom and the narratives of the various sources. This, however, in Terence's opinion, resulted only in bad Latin (*scribendo male*), and in good Greek plays being turned into bad Latin ones.² Hence his preference for a freer treatment, for that process of "contamination" (*contaminatio*) with which he was charged by his rivals,³ and which stood for a fusing together of scenes from one or more Greek plays in accordance with dramatic exigencies. This at least was his practice in the *Andria*, the *Eunuch*, and the *Adelphi*; and it was a practice he defended, quoting in one place the authority of Naevius, Plautus, and Ennius;⁴ though the principle involved, which was afterwards adopted by Shakespeare, was justified also by its artistic effects, by the added richness and variety thus given to a plot. Similar claims for freedom of treatment are, however, represented in the defence he makes against the charge of plagiarism (*furtum*),⁵ that is, the appropriation of Greek drama that had already been Latinised. It is true that in one place he explains that he had only taken over such parts of a play as had been left untouched;⁶ and in another place his excuse is that he was unaware that his source had previously been utilised.⁷ Elsewhere however he goes to the root of the matter, and asserts his right to make use of characters and motives which had appeared previously in literature. "There is nothing now said", he states,⁸ "that has not been said before" (*nullumst iam dictum quod non dictum sit prius*); and with this he maintains the right of the artist to take his material wherever he finds it. Such then in the main is Terence's contribution to criticism; and not a few of his contentions where dramatic technique is concerned are of great and lasting value. In an age when the subject-matter of comedy had become hackneyed and the prescribed methods conventional, he endeavoured in his practice to infuse new life

¹ *Eun.* 7.² *Ibid.*³ *Andria*, 16; *Heaut.* 17.⁴ *Andria*, 18; *Heaut.* 18.⁵ *Eun.* 23; *Adelphi*, 13.⁶ *Adelphi*, 9-10.⁷ *Eun.* 34.⁸ *Ibid.* 41.

into the drama and to raise it thereby to higher levels. And these efforts are reflected in the principles he lays down, indifferent alike to the crude demands of the populace and to the cramping pedantry of rival poets.

Characteristic of the second century B.C. in yet another sense is the critical material found in the work of Lucilius (185-103 B.C.). Like Terence he too belonged to the Scipionic circle, was probably Terence's successor as the intimate friend of Scipio and Laelius; and in his writings will be found the same influences, the same independence of thought, and the same concern with artistic matters as had characterised the work of the comic poet. Of his *Satires* or *Sermones* (as he preferred to call them), numbering thirty books in all, few passages of any length have come down. The numerous fragments that have survived were however first collected by Dousa in the sixteenth century, and have since been edited more than once;¹ and, as a result of what must be termed a triumph of scholarship, it has now become possible to form some idea of the work as a whole, and of not a few of its details as well. That the *Satires* in the main afforded a faithful picture of the social and intellectual life of the time with its various interests and activities can scarcely be doubted. But over and above this, something may also be gleaned of the several parts of the work. Thus the first book was clearly a mock-heroic account of the Council of the gods; a piece of work with which Seneca's later *Apocolocyntosis* has certain affinities.² Another book dealt with the incidents of a journey to Capua, an account which Horace imitated in his story of his journey to Brundisium;³ while other books concerned themselves with literary and grammatical questions, or again with current estimates of public men and men of letters. Most important of all is, however, the autobiographical element in the work, for which we have the assurance of Horace. "The whole life of the poet," he states,⁴ "his inmost thoughts, are there revealed as if painted on a votive tablet"; and of special interest for our

¹ The latest edition is that of F. Marx (see p. 1 *supra*) to which reference is made in the footnotes.

² See D'Alton, *op. cit.* p. 49 n.

³ *Sat.* I, v.

⁴ *Hor. Sat.* II, I, 30-4, the passage so aptly placed by Boswell on the title-page of his *Life of Johnson*.

present purpose are the critical views of Lucilius which have thus been preserved.

Interesting, in the first place, are Lucilius's comments on contemporary literature and speech, and his efforts as a member of the Scipionic circle to temper the unbalanced enthusiasm for rash experiments in expression which then prevailed.¹ As yet literature was still in the imitative stage, with the vernacular undeveloped; and, in the effort to impart to Latin something of the grandeur of Greek effects, all poets alike had resorted to daring and often ill-judged devices which had led to extravagance and turgidity in style. To this tendency the Scipionic circle offered a strenuous resistance, inspired no doubt by Stoic influences which urged moderation and restraint in expression. Hence the stress laid from the first on pure Latinity, and on the avoidance of all kinds of improprieties of diction. To this matter, it is true, Ennius had already drawn attention. He had decried the crude effects of those who before him had sung in Saturnian verse;² he had claimed himself to be the first conscious artist in words (*dicti studiosus*); and in his hands the Latin language had acquired new power and beauty. At the same time he was not free from the prevailing weakness; new coinages and compounds abound in his work. And it is with Lucilius that we get the first adequate treatment of this problem, the first direct attack on current abuses of diction.

Among the main objects of his censure were, first, the solecisms and provincialisms used by many of his contemporaries. In one place, for example, he gives a list of current solecisms;³ in another he condemns the mixture of Tuscan, Sabine, and Praenestine words used by one Vettus;⁴ and elsewhere he pours ridicule on the rustic utterance of the practor Caccilius.⁵ It would indeed seem as if thus early the conception of *urbanitas* was in process of forming, even though the term itself was introduced later by Varro and Cicero.⁶ In addition he girds more than once at the fondness for Grecisms, which was

¹ See D'Alton, *op. cit.* pp. 39-58, for a valuable account of the work of Lucilius to which I am indebted.

² *Annales*, 213.

³ Fr. 1100.

⁴ Fr. 1322.

⁵ Fr. 1130.

⁶ See D'Alton, *op. cit.* p. 42.

a mannerism much affected in the cultured circles of his day. Thus Albucius, he states, preferred to pass for a Greek than for a Roman or a Sabine;¹ and he derides the common weakness for using Greek words like *lychnus* in place of good Latin words like *lucernas* or "lamps".² Apart from this, however, he attacks not infrequently the diction of the earlier poets, making an effective use of parody for that purpose. Ennius for one he charged with "lack of dignity", as Horace recalls;³ and imitations of Ennius's phrases occur frequently in the *Satires*.⁴ Accius too comes in for attack;⁵ and in particular his innovation in spelling, the indicating of length by the doubling of vowels,⁶ was also opposed by Lucilius. Nor does Pacuvius escape censure; his turgid style is more than once parodied,⁷ while his use of strange compounds and unusual words such as *monstrificabile*, *contemnificus*, *repedare*, and the like, is also ridiculed.⁸

Yet Lucilius did not confine his remarks to matters of diction, important as this subject was at the time. In his *Satires* will also be found traces of current controversies bearing on critical matters, as for instance the famous quarrel between Albucius and Mucius Scaevola. The latter as a Stoic had but little use for niceties of expression, whereas Albucius would seem to have aimed above all at distinction of style; and Lucilius represents Scaevola as attacking Albucius for his artificialities, and threatening to call his son-in-law Crassus to his assistance. In this passage occurs what is perhaps the happiest, and certainly the most familiar, piece of criticism that has come from Lucilius. The effects of Albucius's style, and more particularly of the cunning arrangement and setting of his words, he compares to those of "the blocks of a tessellated pavement artfully and intricately arranged" (*ut tesserulae omnes arte pavimento atque emblemate uermiculato*).⁹ And this description of an artificial style, with its underlying suggestion of laboured and mechanical contrivance, became a commonplace among later critics, being utilised more than once by Cicero¹⁰ and again by Quintilian.¹¹

¹ Frs. 88 ff. ² Frs. 15-16; cf. also Fr. 71.

⁴ Frs. 4, 18, 939, 996, 1008, etc.

⁶ Frs. 352 ff.; cf. also Quin. *Inst. Or.* I, 7, 15.

⁸ Frs. 608, 654, 677.

¹⁰ *De Orat.* III, 171; *Br.* 274; *Or.* 149.

³ *Sat.* I, x, 54.

⁵ Cf. Frs. 143, 170.

⁷ Fr. 597.

⁹ Frs. 81-5.

¹¹ *Inst. Or.* IX, 4, 113.

It may also have drawn from the elder Pliny his remark that Lucilius was the Roman "who founded in the first instance a taste for style" (*condidit stili nasum*).¹ Then too there seems to be no doubt that Lucilius himself was subject to attacks from his contemporaries on the score that his *Satires* wounded.² And by way of defence he explains something of his objects in writing, and the nature of this new *genre*. It is not without its significance, for instance, that he describes his verses not as *saturae* but as *schedia*³ (improvisations) in one place, and elsewhere as *ludi* and *sermones*;⁴ implying thereby a loose and familiar style not unmixed with humour. In respect of subject-matter his work, he maintained, was allied to comedy, both being *species uitae* (mirrors of life);⁵ and his object he defined as that of social reform, not slander,⁶ at the same time denying to himself the name of poet. Such theories⁷ may well have originated in the Scipionic circle; and it is not difficult to see in them the beginnings of those discussions on satire in which Horace later on was to play a part.

There yet remain to be mentioned those traces of Hellenistic theory in his work, which further illustrate the critical activity of the time as well as the range of his own interests and learning. That he was familiar with some of the earlier discussions is seen from his remarks on *poema* and *poesis*. Thus *poema* he defines somewhat loosely as a lesser kind of verse-form, such as an epistle for example; while the term *poesis* he applies to a work of greater magnitude, such as the *Iliad* or, as he significantly adds, the *Annales* of Ennius.⁸ This distinction, it is true, differs from that of Posidonius who, according to Diogenes Laertius,⁹ defined *poema* as "diction in metre or rhythm which by virtue of the artistic grouping of words transcends mere prose"; *poesis*, again, as "expressive (or significant) creation, comprising an imitation of things both human and divine". But while this explanation of Posidonius is more clearly reminiscent of Hellenistic doctrine, Lucilius's version is not without its interest. It

¹ *Nat. His.* Pref. 7.² Frs. 1017 ff.³ Fr. 1279.⁴ Fr. 1039.⁵ Frs. 1028-9.⁶ Frs. 1030-4.⁷ See D'Alton, *op. cit.* pp. 53-7, for a fuller account.⁸ Frs. 339 ff.⁹ vii, 60.

shows his acquaintance with Hellenistic terminology and doctrine; and to him has been attributed a theory of poetry having points in common with that of Horace's *Ars Poetica*.¹ Elsewhere he shows his appreciation of euphony as an element of style; and in particular, the ill-sounding effects of such letters as *s* and *r*.² He also ridicules such trivial devices as *homoeoteleuton*;³ has something to say concerning other rhetorical tricks;⁴ and in one place he anticipates Horace in advising that the poet should choose tasks within his powers.⁵ All these are but fragments, and many of them obscure; but they are sufficient to prove that Lucilius played no inconsiderable part as a critic. His *Satires*, it may safely be said, were among the things that counted in the early development of Roman criticism.

These then are the main contributions made to criticism in the second century B.C.; though to them must also be added the works of Accius and Volcarius Sedigitus, elements less important though not without their interest. The critical contributions of the poet Accius (170-94 B.C.) were of a historico-literary kind. In the *Pragmatica* he seems to have dealt with dramatic questions; whereas in the *Didascalica*, which consisted of nine books, he attempted a history of Greek and Roman poetry.⁶ Of these works, however, only a fragment of the *Didascalica*, a portion of Book ix, has survived; and this consists of a treatment of the *genres* of poetry, though Accius is also known to have interested himself elsewhere in the plays of Plautus and in matters of orthography. Reminiscent again of Hellenistic activities is the metrical treatise *De Poetis* of Volcarius Sedigitus, of which Gellius⁷ has preserved a section consisting of a canon or list of Roman comic poets. Here an attempt was made to do for Roman poetry what Aristophanes of Byzantium and Aristarchus had done for the Greeks, that is, to arrange the chief poets in order of merit in their particular *genres*. And

¹ See G. C. Fiske, *Lucilius and Horace* (Wisconsin Stud. No. 7, 1920), pp. 446-75; also C. Cichorius, *Untersuchungen zu Lucilius* (Berlin, 1908), pp. 109-27.

² Frs. 377-81.

³ Fr. 181.

⁴ Frs. 26, 603.

⁵ Frs. 628-30, see D'Alton, *op. cit.* p. 57.

⁶ See G. L. Hendrickson (*Amer. J. Phil.* 1894, 1898) for a discussion of this work as a pre-Varronian chapter in literary history.

⁷ *Noctes Atticae*, xv, 24.

Volcacius has preserved what seems to have been the current estimates of writers of comedy. Thus Caecilius he places first for his qualities of broad farce; Plautus was probably second, Naevius third, and Terence is sixth on the list. This arrangement, which seems to us strange, may possibly have been due to Terence's avoidance of the broader effects of comedy. But it may also have been the penalty paid for innovation; the official estimate formulated in the first instance by the *collegium poetarum*, which remained hostile to Terence throughout his career.

Leaving now the second century B.C., interesting as illustrating the beginnings of criticism at Rome, we pass to the century that followed, and more particularly to the first half of that century, to find criticism entering on a new and more active phase, and one that was destined to affect permanently the later history of the subject. Hitherto critical effort for the most part had confined itself to poetry and some of its problems. Now the dominant question for the time being became one of rhetoric, its standards and methods: whether, in general, the ideals to be followed were those of the classical or the Hellenistic Greeks. And this constituted the outstanding issue of the first half of the first century B.C., forming ultimately the main subject of Cicero's inquiry where rhetoric was concerned. The problem was one that had arisen naturally in the course of events. Already in the second century B.C. some amount of interest had been shown in rhetorical theory, a new oratory having come into being, represented by the Gracchi, Scipio, Laelius, Scaevola, Crassus, and M. Antonius. In the meantime the influence of the Stoics had been felt in the Scipionic circle; and, although Cato had previously written on rhetoric, the representative teaching of the second century B.C. (and later) was that of Hermagoras, who was subsequently to be Cicero's guide in matters of rhetoric. The teaching of Hermagoras, however, was of the scholastic kind characteristic of the Hellenistic period,¹ with its sterile analyses, its mechanical cut-and-dried systems, its abundant categories and technical terms. And the question was now raised whether after all such treat-

¹ See Quin. *Inst. Or.* III, 1, 16 *et passim*.

ment was really the most adequate. Then, too, in the course of the first century B.C. a further clash of opinion arose on one particular and important point, namely, on what constituted good style in oratory and prose literature. On the one hand were those who claimed for the flamboyant "Asiatic" manner a clear supremacy; and of this style Hortensius (114-50 B.C.) was the leading exponent, though Cicero in his early years also betrayed something of its influence. As against this there were others who set up as their model a strict "Attic" form, limiting their methods mainly to those of Lysias and Thucydides, and aiming above all at severity and restraint. To this group belonged Calpidius, Caesar, Brutus, and Calvus; and here was another of those questions which were to be debated for more than a century to come, and which gave rise more especially to Cicero's critical work.

For the proper understanding of the part played by Cicero in the critical development, however, something more must first be said concerning the nature of the orthodox teaching in rhetoric during the first half of the first century B.C. The earlier rhetorical treatise of Cato (234-149 B.C.) has already been mentioned. It was designed originally for his son Marcus, but has since been lost; all that has come down being Cato's definition of an orator as "a virtuous man skilled in speaking" (*vir bonus dicendi peritus*), and his still more famous precept "get clear ideas and words will follow" (*rem tene, verba sequentur*). Both were probably of Stoic origin; and, whereas the latter in its original context possibly inculcated a style that depended less on rules of art than on native ability, it was subsequently more often quoted to emphasise the need for a sound grasp of subject-matter as a necessary preliminary to the formation of a good style. It is, however, in the anonymous *Rhetorica ad Herennium* (c. 86 B.C.) that we find the first work of real significance belonging to the first century B.C.; and from its pages may incidentally be gathered the condition of the study in Cicero's youth, and therefore the position from which he started. Apart from this the treatise is of further interest historically, owing to its popularity and influence in the Middle Ages and the early Renaissance. For centuries it was regarded as a

production of Cicero; and in Italy of the fifteenth century it was consequently accepted as a standard authority in rhetoric, while later the English scholar Wilson, in his *Art of Rhetoric* (1553), embodied certain sections of the work, believing them to represent pure Ciceronian doctrine. By Erasmus's day, however, the authenticity of the work was being questioned; and the treatise has since been ascribed to a certain Cornificius belonging to the age of Sulla, a theory supported by the fact that certain quotations made by Quintilian from the *Rhetorica* of Cornificius are found to correspond closely with the text of *Ad Herennium*.¹

The work is however of interest in itself; for what we have here is obviously a treatment of the subject based on the lost Hellenistic rhetorics, as well as a manual of oratory commonly used in the Roman schools. The treatise consists of four Books.² Book I deals in general with the three kinds of oratory, the forensic, the deliberative, and the epideictic; and in accordance with tradition, the subject is treated in a rigidly systematic fashion. First, the elements or qualitative parts of oratory (*inventio, dispositio, elocutio*, etc.) are given; then the six divisions³ or quantitative parts of a speech (*exordium, narratio, divisio*, etc.); and the requisite skill is said to be acquired by *ars, imitatio*, and *exercitatio*. Book II confines itself to a treatment of forensic oratory, while Book III deals with oratory of the deliberative and epideictic kinds; and both are concerned mainly with arguments and subject-matter. Book IV, on the other hand, is devoted to style; it consists of nearly half the work, and is to us the section of greatest interest. The three main styles are indicated, the grand, the middle, and the plain; and then practical advice is given for the formation of a correct and an attractive style. A certain elegance, it is pointed out, would be obtained by the use of correct Latin, by avoiding solecisms and unusual words; while in composition, among the things to be avoided were hiatus, undue repetition of the same letters or words, jingling rhymes, and inordinately long sentences.

¹ See Quin. *Inst. Or.* IX, 2, 27; IX, 3, 71, 89, 98.

² For a detailed account see A. S. Wilkins's ed. of Cicero, *De Oratore*, I, pp. 51-64.

³ See vol. I, 90.

Furthermore, dignity and charm of style were obtained by Figures of speech and Figures of thought. The number of such Figures was said to be countless; but among the most noteworthy of the former were included antithesis, repetition of words for emphasis, repetition of the same idea in different words, as well as coinages, periphrasis, and metaphors, while among the latter were mentioned similes, *exempla*, and personification.

Such then is the outline of this text-book of rhetoric; and it may be taken as characteristic of many earlier and contemporary treatises embodying the same methods, divisions, and terminology. But while its author has drawn freely on earlier Greek writers, he has selected and adapted his material to suit Roman needs. It is from Roman history for example that he takes his subjects of controversy; Pacuvius, Plautus, and Ennius furnish him with further material; and many of his illustrations of style are of his own invention. And in this way the work witnesses to the assimilation of Greek learning and its modification by the Roman spirit before Cicero came. Nor is this its only claim to attention; for apart from the fact that it is one of the earliest works in Latin prose that have come down complete, it also embodies the earliest treatment of prose style in Latin, and presents, also for the first time in Latin, the classification of plain, middle, and grand in connexion with style. Here and there, moreover, will be found other points of interest; as when, for instance, it is pointed out that defects in style are often virtues carried to excess,¹ or again that restraint is needed in the use of Figures lest they degenerate into mere empty display.² To the Figures on the other hand the author assigned undue importance; though he attempts at times a treatment from the psychological standpoint. Yet another defect is his imperfect adaptation of Greek rhetorical terminology,³ a fault which often leads to a perplexing vagueness in his treatment. And, for the rest, the shortcomings of the work in general are those that belong to most text-books; it is little more than a summary, and in places, a catalogue, devoid of the larger and more stimulating philosophical treat-

¹ iv, 10, 15 ff. ² iv, 23, 32. ³ See J. F. D'Alton, *op. cit.* pp. 205-6.

ment. Nevertheless in the history of criticism it has its place; and Cicero was to make use of it in his early work *De Inventione*.

In the meantime a contribution of another kind that calls for notice came also from Varro (116-27 B.C.). He was an encyclopaedic scholar and patriot, of whose multitudinous works only two have come down, including part of his *De Lingua Latina*, a treatise of twenty-five Books, of which only Books v-x have survived. His aim throughout was to Romanise Greek learning; and in the sphere of letters his best work was probably done in connexion with grammar, though he wrote also on the drama, on poetry, and style. He thus continued at Rome the tradition of Hellenistic scholarship; and the influence of Cleanthes, Aristophanes of Byzantium, and Dionysius Thrax may be traced in his work. One of his achievements was the collection of much of the earlier Latin poetry, in connexion with which he also drew up canons; while his services to Plautine scholarship were also considerable, his establishment of the authenticity of twenty-one of the comedies being of lasting importance. The nature of his work in the field of linguistic studies is perhaps best illustrated by his *De Lingua Latina* where he attempts a systematic treatment of the laws of the Latin language, a task which had been begun by his master Stilo (b. 150 B.C.); and it is here that Stoic influence is most clearly seen. From the Stoics he derived his sense of the value of words, his appreciation of the need for general principles based on the earliest forms; and in general he applies to the Latin language theories which had been developed earlier in connexion with Greek. Among the particular problems which he handles is that earlier quarrel of the grammarians, Analogy *versus* Anomaly; and though evidently an Analogist, a supporter of law in language, he is at the same time conscious of the part played by usage (*consuetudo*) in establishing exceptional forms. Hence his decision is of the nature of a compromise; both Analogy and Anomaly, he maintained, were at work in the development of language. For the rest, his work betrays some of the weaknesses of the earlier grammarians, their love of subtle distinctions, fanciful arguments, and the like; while his occasional judgments on literature are mechanical and un-

convincing, the work of an antiquarian rather than of a critic. Then, too, owing to the loss of so many of his writings his influence on literary history and criticism is not easy to assess, though in the Middle Ages he ranked with Cicero and Virgil as one of the great masters. That he did valuable pioneer work at Rome in helping to make grammar a serious study cannot however be disputed; and his *De Lingua Latina* constitutes the earliest Roman work on that subject that has reached posterity.

With Cicero (106-43 B.C.), however, we return once again into the main stream of the critical development. In him we find one of the outstanding figures in Roman criticism; and his contribution, which raised current discussions on to a higher plane, had also other effects, in that it marked the beginnings of a classical reaction in critical theory, and was destined to have influences of a decisive and far-reaching kind. Of the conditions under which he wrote something has already been said. His chief works were produced about the middle of the first century B.C., after his return from exile (57 B.C.), shorn of his political glory, and playing no longer a leading part in either the law-courts or the senate. And in his efforts to seek relief from the political anxieties of the time, to find also fresh scope for his untiring energies, he turned to a study of literature, to an exposition of the best that had been thought and said in connexion with politics, philosophy, and oratory; and of all his works none is more characteristic or of greater value than those in which he dealt with the subject of oratory. To this particular task he had been attracted by various considerations. There was first the patriotic motive of rivalling Greece in her work on oratory—to him the queen of the literary “kinds”, a potent factor also in public life—and besides, there was the hope of training on sound lines a generation of young speakers who might come to the aid of the Republic in its distress. But over and above this there was also the personal factor; for Cicero from the first had been a zealous student of rhetoric, and now that his position was being challenged, by the Atticists even more than by the Asiatics, it became necessary for him to defend himself against their hostile criticism. Nor was the resultant polemic without its uses; for while in practice it may

have curbed certain Asiatic tendencies in his style, it undoubtedly drew from him reasons for the faith that was in him. The greatest orator of his age, and one of the greatest of all time, was thus induced to attempt a vindication of his methods and theories; and his *apologia* becomes an exposition of the art of oratory, and an introduction in some sort to the principles of art in general.

Concerning the works contributed by Cicero to rhetorical study something must first be said; and to begin with, it is not without its significance that his earliest effort took the form of a treatise on rhetoric, written while its author was still a pupil of Molon and Diodotus. Of this work, *De Inventione* (84 B.C.), two books have come down; and it is obviously nothing more than a summary of the teaching then current, a manual based on the cut-and-dried methods of the *Ad Herennium* and of other recognised authorities, of whom Hermagoras was one. Then for thirty years Cicero was busied with other things, caught in the whirl of public life with its intrigues, its triumphs, and its disappointments; and when he returned to his study of oratory, it was as one who spoke with a new authority, born of his experiences of men and things. In 55 B.C. appeared the first of his greater works, his *De Oratore*, written to correct the immaturities of the earlier *De Inventione*; and then followed in rapid succession his *Brutus* (46 B.C.) and his *Orator* (46 B.C.), works which, with the *De Oratore*, contain the best part of his theory. Subsequent contributions included the *Partitiones Oratoriae* (45 B.C.), an analysis of rhetoric in catechism form, *Topica* (44 B.C.), a summary of Aristotle's teaching on the finding of arguments with examples bearing on Roman law, and lastly, *De Optimo Genere Oratorum*, intended as a preface to his lost translation of the discourses of Demosthenes and Aeschines's *De Corona*. These however add but little to Cicero's achievement; they are a reversion to the earlier and summary form, though *De Optimo Genere Oratorum* has some interesting statements on Asianism and the true Attic style.

It is with his three chief works then that we are mainly concerned; and in the first, *De Oratore*, we have a set of dialogues of the Platonic kind, forming an introduction to the study of

rhetoric, and explaining the general course of training necessary for success as an orator. The setting for the dialogues (which are supposed to be held in 91 B.C.) is the Tusculan villa of Crassus with its gardens and its plane-trees; the chief interlocutors are Crassus and M. Antonius, the two outstanding orators of their age; and other contemporaries, Scaevola, Sulpicius, and Cotta are introduced as interested listeners. On each of three days a dialogue is held; and the work is thus divided into three books. In the dialogue of the first day (Book I) Crassus and Antonius discuss the qualifications of a perfect orator, while Crassus incidentally dilates on his own method of training; then on the second day (Book II) Antonius proceeds to expound his views on oratory, to which is added a disquisition on humour (cc. 54-71) by Gaius Julius Caesar, a famous humorist of the day; and finally on the third day (Book III) Crassus once more reverts to the subject of eloquence, this time directing his attention mainly to style. Such then in rough outline is the scheme of *De Oratore*, which may be said to contain the first draft of Cicero's theory, while indicating the lines along which he was to develop that theory. The work *Brutus* which followed is of a different kind. It is a history of oratory in dialogue form, reminiscent of the Aristotelian type; Cicero, the main speaker, is visited in his garden at Rome by Atticus and Brutus, and is induced to attempt an account of earlier orators and their performances. After a sketchy introduction concerned with the Greeks (§§ 26-52), which owed something to Aristotle, comes an account of nearly 200 Roman orators (§§ 53-end) from which, with four exceptions, living orators are omitted; and the account is notable for its detailed information, as well as for the general soundness of its appreciations. Not the least interesting sections are however the digressions which characterise the work, as when, for example, Cicero diverges from his main argument to explain what he regards as the true basis of literary judgment (§§ 183-200). Elsewhere a consideration of Calvus (§§ 283-5) and Hortensius (§§ 325-7) leads on naturally to an expression of views on Atticism and Asianism; and it is not without its significance that the discussion ends with a eulogy of Ciceronian oratory,

which, by implication, was held to mark the culmination of the whole development. In the third of the treatises, the *Orator*, Cicero attempts a portrait of the ideal orator. He is ostensibly writing in reply to Brutus on the questions of literary and oratorical taste under debate at the time; and he writes in the hope of winning over Brutus from the Atticist position. The work is therefore in letter or essay form, written discursively and in critical fashion; and it becomes plain as the work proceeds that Cicero's real object is not so much to lay down precepts or to discuss the question of the existence of an ideal oratory, but rather to justify his own oratorical style. In a short introduction (§§ 1-23) he attempts to give a philosophical basis to his notion of an ideal oratory, after which he discusses briefly the Atticist position (§§ 24-32); and the remainder of the work he devotes to the development of his main argument, with perhaps a disproportionate treatment of the question of style. His polemical purpose is however apparent throughout; and it is specially seen in his excursus on euphony (§§ 149-62) and rhythm (§§ 163-236), which constituted incidentally a defence of the elaborate and rhythmical character of his own particular style.

From what has so far been said of Cicero's three chief works on rhetoric it is obvious at once that here we have something quite different from earlier treatises, something other than those scholastic rhetorics of which *Ad Herennium* was a notable example. And indeed in all three works alike we have evidence of a new departure; of a treatment which witnessed to a larger conception of the subject, to new and more effective methods, and to an artistry unparalled since the days of Plato and Aristotle. Nothing in the first place emerges more clearly from a reading of these works than the fact that in them Cicero was protesting against the narrowing of the province of rhetoric, attempting also to restore something of its earlier scope and vitality. From being a mere scholastic study of the processes of argument or of the technique of style, he wished to make of it a system of general culture, an exposition of the art of speaking or writing well on all possible subjects. And in this aim he was following in the steps of Isocrates, whose guidance, together

with that of Plato and Aristotle, he repeatedly acknowledges;¹ while for the most part he rejected the teachings of contemporary craftsmen and rhetoricians, to whom oratory was either a knack of successful pleading, or else the result of following a certain recognised procedure. Such views he regarded as a serious hindrance to the study of rhetoric; something which had detracted from the success hitherto attained. Hence one of the main ideas underlying the *De Oratore* is that for a more profitable treatment it was necessary to recapture the spirit of the earlier tradition; and Cicero in general adopts as his basis those more spacious conceptions which had been set forth by the great Greek masters.

But if Cicero thus reverts to the classical Greeks for his conception of rhetoric, the same influences are also seen at work in the methods and procedure he adopts for his several inquiries. What he sets out to give is a new analysis of the art of oratory, free from the hackneyed pedantic rules of the schools; and, whether consciously or unconsciously, he succeeds in reviving some of the methods of the earlier authorities. Thus throughout his theorising he works from first principles, his object being to bring to light broad general truths, not rules. His aim, he states in one place, was to point to men "the fountain-heads" (*fontes*);² he refuses to concern himself with an infinity of details, as if nothing could be said without the help of rules.³ And, taking as his starting-point the principle of "nature" or "reason", he develops his theories in accordance with his direct observation of men and things; so that his method, so far from being a blind following of earlier authority, is in fact reminiscent of the rational and psychological methods of Aristotle. Then, too, like Aristotle he takes into account historical considerations. In his *Brutus*, for instance, he studies oratory in its development, noting by what steps it had enlarged its limits and refined its effects; and incidentally he traces also the genesis and development of his own art. But while in general he thus reverts to earlier classical methods, at the same time he does not fail to make use of earlier pronounce-

¹ See Sandys, ed. of *Orator*, pp. lxvii-lxx.

² *De Orat.* i, 203.

³ *Ibid.* ii, 47.

ments in his theorising. For much of his thought he is indebted to Aristotle and Isocrates; but he was evidently familiar as well with most of the post-classical teaching on rhetoric. Such material however he utilises for his own ends. He employs throughout the eclectic method; and already in his *De Inventione* he had approved the method, recalling by way of illustration the procedure of Zeuxis, who in painting his Juno had drawn on the various excellences of the most beautiful maidens of Crotona.¹

Equally striking is however Cicero's artistic handling of his material; for in these writings he has abandoned the severity of the treatise form, and he writes, not for specialists as Aristotle in the *Poetics* and *Rhetoric* had done, but rather for that wider public which Plato had primarily in mind in composing his *Dialogues*. Hence his adoption of the dialogue form in *De Oratore* and *Brutus*, a procedure in which he was following the example of Plato, though in *Brutus*, where Cicero is the main speaker, the model would seem to have been the Aristotelian dialogue. In any case, as a means of rendering effective his exposition of theory the device was highly successful. By choosing as his speakers the most famous of Latin orators, Cicero gives to his work a Roman colouring and an authority which is made all the more real by some vivid characterisation. In the discussions appear Crassus and Antonius, Brutus and Atticus, drawn more or less true to life; and the effect is heightened by the gracious setting in *De Oratore*, and by the dramatic interruptions and comments which enliven the discourse in both works alike. Then, too, the dialogue form lent itself to other effects as well; it permitted of a treatment that was orderly without being obtrusively systematic, while it also made possible a freer consideration of doctrine, which took into account the complexities of literature and those wider questions for which no place had been found in the dogmatic text-books. In the *Orator*, it is true, the letter or essay form is adopted, but here too is found the same easy lucid treatment, while the personal note is even yet more clearly heard. As an essay on style, moreover, the *Orator* has been described as the

¹ *De Invent.* II, 1.

best specimen of rhetorical criticism in Latin literature; so that here again, as in the dialogues, Cicero had broken with the old scholastic tradition, in commending his theories by his way of presenting them and in giving to his work an element of literary charm.

It is, however, when we turn to a more detailed consideration of Cicero's actual theories that we realise more exactly where he stands in the critical development, and the nature of his contribution to rhetorical teaching. As has already been said, he aimed at acquainting his generation with the best that had been thought and said on the subject of rhetoric; and not content with the scholastic teaching, he returns to the fountain-heads, to Plato and Aristotle, Isocrates and Theophrastus, and with their work as basis he attempts a new synthesis, selecting, combining, and extending, in accordance with his own genius and his experience as an orator. On occasion he will be found making use of the technicalities and procedure of the current works on rhetoric. He comments, for instance, on those "trite and common precepts" (*communia et contrita praecepta*)¹ which he had learnt in his youth, matters relating to the kinds and qualitative parts of oratory, and to the quantitative parts of a speech. In some degree, too, he is influenced by the conventional treatment of the subject. In the *Orator*, for example, the arrangement to some extent follows the traditional scheme of *inventio* (§§ 44-9), *ordo* (§ 50), and *elocutio* (§§ 51-236)²; and whereas in *De Inventione*, *Partitiones Oratoriae*, and *Topica* he deals with *ars* or τέχνη, in *De Oratore*, *Brutus*, and the *Orator* he takes as his subject the formation of a perfect orator or *artifex*, thus adopting the antithesis set up by earlier theorists.³ But these considerations, which are mainly formal, are not the determining factors in his work. He proceeds to formulate his doctrines rather in opposition to these traditions; and the greater part of his theorising goes back to the classical Greeks.

Nothing in the first place is more significant of this animating ancient spirit than the enthusiasm with which he reveals what oratory means to him. So far from being mere pleading or a

¹ *De Orat.* I, 137.

² See p. 17 *supra*.

³ See vol. I 171.

scholastic discipline and routine, it represents for Cicero the highest form of intellectual activity, an instrument indispensable for the welfare of the state. And, recalling the claims which Isocrates had previously made on its behalf, he reiterates anew its glorious origin, its civilising force. It was speech, he asserts, that had distinguished men from the brute beasts; it was the power of persuasion that had led to new and better ways of living, to the founding of cities, and to the establishment of laws, institutions, and rights.¹ And from Antonius comes a fine eulogy on oratory, in which eloquence pays a tribute to eloquence itself.² But if Cicero thus recaptures something of the earlier spirit as the inspiration of his teaching, he also takes over some of the more important theories of the great Greek masters. And first among his pronouncements is the need for sound subject-matter; a demand in which he was following both Aristotle and Isocrates. Again and again he emphasises the importance of this fundamental requirement, that clear impressions are needed for sound expression. "No man", he states,³ "can be eloquent on a subject he does not understand"; or again, "What savours so much of madness as the empty sound of words...when there is no meaning or knowledge contained in them?"⁴ In places Cicero would appear to be exaggerating this point, when he demands from his orator an acquaintance with all fields of knowledge, and with philosophy in particular; though the suggestion seems to be that such knowledge would add to the style an element of culture. At any rate he makes it his boast that his own eloquence is inspired "not by the workshops of the rhetoricians, but by the groves of the Academy".⁵ And indeed his insistence on this point is by no means without its interest; for in claiming for oratory a substantial foundation of thought he was calling men away from a barren pursuit of words and phrases, from that "fantastic" learning subsequently condemned by Bacon, which became one of the "peccant humours" of the first century A.D. that followed. Then, too, Cicero is following ancient authority when he insists on the need for an orderly arrangement of

¹ *De Orat.* I, 32-3; cf. also *De Invent.* I, 2.

² *Ibid.* I, 63.

⁴ *Ibid.* I, 51.

² *De Orat.* II, 32 ff.

⁵ *Orat.* III, 12.

thought (*quo quidque loco*).¹ From the first he makes it plain that this requirement is essential, that matter and manner are inseparably related, and that thought must be properly arranged before it can be effectively expressed.² Equally important, however, is his doctrine, which goes back to Plato and Aristotle, that for success in oratory a sound knowledge of psychology, an insight into human nature, is needed. "The proper concern of an orator", he states,³ "is language . . . accommodated to the feelings and the minds of men." Or again, "the highest power of an orator lies in his appeal to the emotions";⁴ and this could be effected only as a result of an acquaintance with human passions and feelings. "All the emotions of the mind which nature has given to men must be intimately known", he adds in another place;⁵ and for him, it is clear, the art of oratory was necessarily based on a careful observation of men and their various characteristics.

While however such emotional effects are regarded in some sense as the touchstone of oratory, Cicero is careful to add that the real function of the orator is more extensive than that; and drawing apparently on some post-Aristotelian authority he describes the orator's aim as being of a threefold kind. The best orator, he states, "teaches (*docet*), delights (*delectat*), and moves (*permovet*) the minds of his hearers; to teach them is his duty, to delight them is creditable to him, to move them is indispensable";⁶ and elsewhere he is found inculcating the same threefold doctrine.⁷ Nor was he without his ideas as to what goes to the making of an effective orator; and here his views are mainly based on a commonplace that was at least as old as Plato. Throughout *De Oratore* and the *Orator* alike, he insists on the primary need for natural capacity or genius (*natura, ingenium*); though such genius, he adds, might be improved and fertilised by a sound technical training (*exercitatio*) together with a liberal education (*studium*).⁸ It is a theory that was obviously derived from the Platonic trinity, φύσις (*natura*), μελέτη (*exercitatio*), ἐπιστήμη (*studium*); while Aristotle, too,

¹ *Orat.* xiv, 43.² *De Orat.* iii, 19 ff.³ *Ibid.* i, 54.⁴ *Ibid.* i, 53.⁵ *Ibid.* i, 17.⁶ *De Opt. Gen. Or.* i, 3.⁷ *De Orat.* ii, 121; *Brut.* xlix, 185.⁸ *De Orat.* i, 113 ff.

according to Diogenes Laertius,¹ had prescribed φύσις, μάθησις, ἀσκησις as the three requisites for education in general. Of the need for *imitatio*, the imitation of good models, first inculcated by Isocrates, he has but little to say; though the process is one that seemingly he takes for granted. In more than one place he recommends Demosthenes for imitation;² while he also points out the necessity for copying the excellences of the model chosen, and not what is easy, bizarre (*insignis*), or faulty in the work.³ In this way does Cicero re-affirm some of the more important theories of the ancients; and indeed he is never far from their tracks, as is further shown by earlier commonplaces scattered throughout his works. Thus he inculcates for one thing the need for the concealment of art; "all suspicion of artifice" (*suspicio artificii*), he states, "is prejudicial to the orator, . . . for it diminishes his authority and the good faith of his speech".⁴ Elsewhere he condemns an excess of art, "for excess offends more than falling short" (*magis offendit nimium quam parum*);⁵ and he insists more than once that the orator should himself feel the emotions he tries to excite.⁶

At the same time Cicero's teaching is by no means limited to a reiteration of earlier doctrines. His exposition is throughout coloured by his own observation and experiences; and in his efforts to put before his readers his notion of the highest oratory, he gives evidence of some original if not very profound thinking. Already in *De Oratore* he had aimed at formulating his conception of an ideal oratory; but in the *Orator* what had been confused and tentative assumed now a more definite form, and in attempting to clarify his own views on the subject, he has recourse to philosophy and the plastic arts for illustration and support. Thus from Plato and the art of Phidias he drew the basic principle of his doctrine, namely, that there existed in nature, according to Plato's theory of "ideas", an ideal form of eloquence, which was eternal, unchanging, and objective in character, the absolute and perfect type, of which all forms of human eloquence were but imperfect copies.⁷ And here, it is

¹ e.g. v, 18.² *Brut.* LXXXIII, 288.³ *De Orat.* II, 90.⁴ *Ibid.* II, 156.⁵ *Orat.* XXII, 73.⁶ *De Orat.* II, 189-90.⁷ *Orat.* II, 7-III, 10.

perhaps worth noting, is the first rough statement of what was to be later the doctrine of the literary "kinds". Cicero's statement, it is true, was concerned with oratory only; but, extended to literature in general (and for this, Aristotle's classification of poetic forms had prepared the way), it resulted in the law of ideal literary forms, according to which there existed for every *genre* or "kind" of poetry a fixed and perfect pattern in the world of "ideas". And the theory is one that was destined to colour much of the later critical doctrine. Its influence may, for instance, be traced in that conception of formal and abstract ideals in literature which prevailed at the Renaissance, as well as in that belief in fixed patterns for tragedy and the "heroic poem", which possessed so many of the poets of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.¹

But while with Cicero thus originated the conception of an ideal oratory, his immediate concern was with oratory of a practical kind; and leaving forthwith the high philosophical level, he proceeds to develop his theory in the light of earlier achievements and in accordance with principles derived from his own practice. Nor was his theorising unaffected by contemporary influences. Just as Aristotle's treatment of both poetry and rhetoric was in part conditioned by the need of replying to certain questions of his day, so Cicero's treatment of oratory is likewise in part determined by the current debates on style; and throughout his discussions he has obviously in mind that much-vexed question as to whether the Asiatic or the Atticist manner represented the highest form of the orator's art. And the results are seen in the place given to style in his treatment of oratory. What concerns him most is the question of effective utterance; and to this aspect of his subject he devotes most of his attention. The greater part of the *Orator*, for instance, which represents his mature and considered judgment, is in the main a treatment of this particular theme.

Of importance in the first place are certain broad principles that he lays down in connexion with style. And, to begin with, he demands for success in oratory something more than an ideal and unchanging style. For one thing there was the human

¹ See *Essays of Dryden*, ed. W. P. Ker, pp. xvi f.

factor. Individual styles, he pointed out, would vary with the ever-changing dispositions and tastes of men (*naturae variae et voluntates*);¹ and here Cicero conceives of style as an expression of personality, a conception that was revived later at the Renaissance. Then, again, the style of the individual had to be adapted to circumstances and the immediate purpose; and since the function of the orator was threefold in kind, his purpose being broadly, to teach, to delight, and to move, his style would therefore be responsive to those several aims, a plain style simple and unadorned for teaching, a middle style more highly coloured yet restrained for giving delight, and a grand style sublime and ardent for stirring men's minds.² In the discriminating use of these several styles lay in short the distinguishing mark of the perfect orator; so that for Cicero true eloquence in practice consisted in a reasoned modification of the ideal form, and more particularly in a happy combination of the grand style with other and less ambitious veins. And he further explains how such modifications should in general be made; they are to be the outcome of the application of the principle of *decorum* (τὸ πρέπον), that principle already enunciated by Aristotle and Theophrastus, which became the all-embracing critical doctrine characteristic of the Latin genius. Again and again Cicero emphasises its importance, insisting on its nature as an animating principle, a factor relative not absolute, and therefore incapable of being reduced to a set of rules. "The perfect orator", he states,³ "will speak in whatever style the case may demand." He will observe propriety in his work as a whole as well as in its several parts, and, concerning himself also with both subject-matter and style, he will adapt both to his audience (or readers) and conditions. Elsewhere Cicero quotes with approval the dictum of the actor Roscius, that "a sense of fitness, of what is becoming, is the main thing in art, and yet the only thing which could not be taught by art".⁴ And altogether it is clear that to him *decorum* was nothing more than a principle of life transferred to the sphere of art; it was, in short, the quality of moderation

¹ *Orat.* xvi, 52; *Brut.* xxi, 83.

² *De Orat.* ii, 128; *Orat.* xxi, 69.

³ *Orat.* xxi, 70 ff.

⁴ *De Orat.* i, 132.

or good taste, an ignorance of which, so he explains, led to faults in human conduct, besides being the principal source of defects in poems and speeches.¹

With these then as guiding principles of his theory, Cicero proceeds to elaborate his ideas on style, again with the help of the ancients, emphasising certain points which he regards as important, but aiming at neither a systematic nor an exhaustive treatment. That much depended, to begin with, on a suitable vocabulary, he states more than once. "In speaking", he maintains,² "it is the very greatest of faults to depart from the language of everyday life." And elsewhere he adds in more detailed and definite fashion that good style is based on a choice of fit words, that is, words selected from the language actually used by men, not a separate jargon; words, moreover, that are free from provincial, hackneyed, and commonplace elements, yet comprising unusual forms and metaphors to give elevation and colour to the effect³. At the same time perfection of style is to him something more than clear, idiomatic, and racy expression. There are subtle effects bound up with words in combination or arranged in sentences; and it is to the music and rhythm of style that Cicero for the most part directs attention, stating that according to the ancients, there was in prose (*soluta oratio*) a harmony almost like that of poetry.⁴ In general, he asserts, the words chosen should be such as sound well; and they should be arranged with a view to harmonious effects, without clashing of consonants or harsh vocalic collisions,⁵ but with all the devices of antithesis and the like which go to produce the most pleasing results.⁶ The sentence-structure he recommends is of a periodic kind, that arrangement being not only beautiful in itself but also natural and necessary; an argument which leads on to a hint in passing as to his conception of beauty as a sort of by-product, seeing that "Nature has contrived that the things which have the greatest utility have also the greatest dignity and beauty".⁷ Yet while the periodic structure is said to have been ordained by Nature, its charac-

¹ *Orat.* XXI, 70-5;

² *De Orat.* I, 12.

³ *Ibid.* III, 38ff.

⁴ *Ibid.* III, 173.

⁵ *Ibid.* III, 171.

⁶ *Orat.* XLIX, 163ff.

⁷ *De Orat.* III, 178.

teristic roundness and fullness are not to be invariable. "A sentence", wrote Cicero,¹ "should be interrupted by smaller clauses, . . . the cadence of which should be varied; while particular attention should also be paid to the conclusion of periods, because it is from them that the finish and completeness of the style is mostly judged."

But it is on the need for rhythm in prose that he most strenuously insists. It is a feature, he points out, long recognised among the Greeks, abused it is true by Gorgias and his school, but duly established by Aristotle, Isocrates and others, and only recently appreciated by orators at Rome (*nos nuper agnovimus*).² Hence Cicero's emphasis on the doctrine, behind which thus lay the weight of authority; though apart from this its merits were said to be palpable to all. For rhythm in prose was no mere trick or device but a natural form of utterance which gratified a deep and permanent instinct in man, gave fresh grace of movement, and added a new music to words artistically arranged. As to its nature, he points out that words in prose are not bound by strict laws such as those of verse. Following Aristotle he states that "metre in prose is a fault";³ and that the rhythm of a prose passage must be constantly varying in order to avoid such metrical effects. For the rest, metrical feet of all kinds might be used for rhythmical purposes, the pæan, the iambic, the dactylic and others;⁴ while rhythm ought to pervade a whole sentence from beginning to end. At the same time an oration should not be rhythmical throughout; nor should the rhythm be the result of obvious artifice. Its proper use, added Cicero, is characteristic neither of the "Asiatics" who were "slaves to rhythm", nor of those others who, following Hegesias, broke up their rhythm and fell as a result into a spiritless and monotonous style.⁵ As a component of prose style, however, its presence was said to be essential; and its value was seen by transposing however slightly the words of a polished piece of prose, whereupon the charm and the beauty would be found to have completely vanished. These, then, in brief and summary form, are among the chief points

¹ *De Orat.* III, 190-2.² *Orat.* II, 171.³ *De Orat.* III, 175.⁴ *Orat.* LVII, 194.⁵ *Ibid.* LXIX, 230.

made by Cicero in his theorising on oratory; and incidentally should be noted the comparative lack of importance attached to the rhetorical Figures, those elements which at a later date were to monopolise the attention. In *De Oratore* he explains that a certain force and elegance resulted from the use of figurative expressions, whether of thought or speech;¹ but such devices, he adds, were innumerable, and he is content to deal with them summarily as with something of less than the first importance.

Closely bound up with Cicero's exposition of rhetorical theory are, however, his pronouncements on the "Asiatic-Atticist" question, a controversy which had arisen as a result of the shifting of emphasis in rhetorical prose about the middle of the century. From Hellenistic centres, and notably through Hegesias, had come the tradition of the Asiatic style, which, with its lavish ornament and glaring artifice, had appealed to the preceding generation of orators, and to some extent had established itself in the work of Crassus, Sulpicius, and Hortensius. In the meantime a direct and serious challenge had come to this type of oratory, and indeed to all styles that aimed at ornate and elaborate effects. Shorter speeches, a more realistic treatment, and a plainer style were being demanded by the new political conditions; and these tendencies were fostered by Stoic and Epicurean teachers who from the first had recommended a matter-of-fact expression. Conscious of these changes, a younger school of orators, with Calvus at their head, aimed at giving to the movement artistic direction. Adopting as their chief models Lysias and Thucydides, the one for his simplicity and craft, the other for his intensity and force, they advocated a style that was neat, precise, and unadorned; and for this style they claimed the sanction of ancient authority, arrogating to themselves the name of Atticists. The movement was one that received considerable support, owing partly to the quality and status of its advocates, partly also to the conditions out of which it arose; and this was the challenge which Cicero undertook to meet, a challenge which threatened much of what was best in his theory and practice.

¹ *De Orat.* III, 202-5.

Of Cicero's attitude to the rival tendencies there can be no doubt. He condemned both alike, though on different grounds. With the excesses of the Asiatics he deals more than once; but apart from this, his whole exposition of theory is a commentary on their position. Based as that theory was on the teaching of Aristotle and Isocrates, it represents above all a deliberate attempt to win back oratory from false Hellenistic standards to the saner traditions and methods of classical Greece. Nor could he approve of the claims of the Atticists that in their neat, fastidious, and precious style, a style that was free from all that was impassioned and ornate, they and they only had realised the ideals of the Attic tradition. Of the style of Calvus he speaks with respect. It was Attic in its simplicity, its refinement, its freedom from excess; it was moreover polished and concise. But then it was also bald and colourless; with it there went a suggestion of artifice and preciousness, which robbed it of all living force and spirit. And applying to it the natural test, namely, its power of appealing to the general public and of winning their approbation and sympathy, Cicero finds it to be defective on that particular score, and thus to fall short of the highest oratory.¹ But over and above this, he maintained, the Atticists in their theory were wrong, in adopting Lysias mainly, and Thucydides to a lesser degree, as their sole models of the Attic manner. Thucydides he dismissed as an immature stylist; and for a later generation to imitate his obscure and disjointed sentences was like returning, he said, to the husks and acorns of a primitive age amidst the amenities of a higher civilisation.² On the other hand, Lysias he conceded to be truly Attic; he is said to be Attic in his pure and lucid diction, in his simplicity, his naturalness and never-failing tact. But, as Cicero points out, what was forgotten was that he was not the only Attic orator, and that the whole of Attic quality was therefore not summed up in him.³ The truth was that Atticism in its real sense was limited to no one style; it stood for those varied qualities bound up with the great Athenians, all the artistic excellences in their works which appealed to the universal

¹ *Brut.* LXXXII.² *Orat.* IX, 31.³ *Ibid.* IX, 28.

sense. Its beauty was not necessarily of the severe kind; it did not ignore the resources of sound and rhythm, any more than those arrangements of words that charmed and moved. It could on occasion be impassioned and ornate, as well as sober and concise; it touched all the stops, responded to all conditions, served many purposes; but it never worked contrary to the fundamental laws of art. In short, "to speak well", wrote Cicero, "is to speak in the Attic fashion";¹ and he commends his contemporaries for their choice of Attic models. But their imitation was to be of the right kind; they were to adopt the animating principles of the great Athenians, "not merely to copy the dry bones but also to imbibe the living spirit of their models" (*nec ossa solum sed etiam sanguinem*).² And in Demosthenes, he maintained, the rich variety of Attic quality was most adequately enshrined, a fact which made him the perfect pattern of an Attic orator, and therefore the model to be imitated by those aiming at the Attic style.³ Thus does Cicero pronounce judgment on the question of his day; and in taking up his position he was doubtless influenced in part by personal considerations. For he had come to realise with the instinct of genius that he could belong to neither of the schools; and his protest was in substance a defence of his own spacious and emotional style, with its ever-varying harmonies, its colour, its architectural effects, one of the greatest of artistic creations. But his pronouncement was also something more than that. It was a plea for a more controlled yet generous art in the field of oratory; and his judgment rested on permanent grounds. It is true that he fails to notice certain points subsequently made by Quintilian,⁴ which go to confirm his verdict, as to the inherent unsuitability of the Atticist style for Roman oratory; and again, his teaching in this matter was to prove ineffective, the Atticist tradition maintaining itself in the generation that followed. Yet in calling men away from the vulgar excesses of the Asiatics and the narrow limitations of the Atticists he rendered substantial service. For he presented his age not only with a broader conception of Atticism, but also with a truer and more com-

¹ *De Opt. Gen. Or.* III.

³ *Orat.* VII, 23.

² *Brut.* XVII, 68.

⁴ *Inst. Orat.* XII, 10, 27-31.

plete interpretation of the classical ideal; and in that, after all, lay his most lasting critical achievement.

It is by virtue of his work on rhetoric, then, that Cicero figures in the history of criticism. At the same time not without their interest are his occasional remarks on other forms of literary art as well as his literary judgments, the former as throwing light on the theories of his day, the latter as being the critical utterances of a great artist on his own craft. Towards poetry he betrays an obvious rhetorical bias. The poet he describes as "closely akin to the orator, being somewhat more restricted in rhythm, but freer in his choice of words, and in many kinds of embellishment his rival and almost his equal".¹ And this suggestion of patronage is not without its significance. For to Cicero and to most of his contemporaries, oratory was queen of the literary "kinds", with poetry as her handmaid; and this treatment of poetry from a rhetorical standpoint was to remain a feature of Roman criticism to the end. As his conception of the poetic function he puts forward the "profit and delight" theory subsequently associated with Horace. In his defence of the poet Archias he argues the use of poetry for educational purposes, and its usefulness in commemorating great nations and famous men.² But he also gives a reminder of the never-failing charm of the works of the poet. "The food of youth and the delight of old age, they adorn prosperity, offer to misfortune a refuge and a comfort, at home they give pleasure, abroad they are no hindrance, they pass with us the night, they accompany us on our travels, and they share our holidays."³ It was an ample vindication of poetry on other than utilitarian grounds, and was a plea all too seldom raised by the writers of antiquity.

Of theories concerning the art of poetry, on the other hand, his works naturally present but few traces; though he gives evidence of the existence at this date of the doctrine of the literary "kinds", and on one at least of those "kinds" he has something of interest to say. That he was acquainted in some sort with the doctrine is seen from his statement that "of poets there are a great many divisions, tragic, comic, epic, lyric, and

¹ *De Orat.* I, 70.

² *Pro Archia*, 12-30.

³ *Ibid.* 16.

dithyrambic".¹ And when he adds further that "every kind is different from the rest, so that in tragedy anything comic is a defect, and in comedy anything tragic is out of place, while in the other kinds each has its appropriate note", he puts forward the notion of the exclusiveness of the several "kinds", which was to be an important article of the poetic creed at the Renaissance. In connexion with comedy, however, he is more specific. According to "Donatus" he is said² to have described comedy as an *imitatio vitae, speculum consuetudinis, imago veritatis*, a definition which became current in later ages. But in addition to this he puts forward certain theories concerning the comic in general which are of considerable interest, in view of the comparative neglect of the subject by the theorists of antiquity. As to the actual nature of the comic or ridiculous, it arises, he states, "out of a certain ugliness or deformity which is pointed to as something offensive, but in an inoffensive manner" (*turpitudinem aliquam non turpiter*).³ And here, following Aristotle, he insists on the harmlessness of the defects associated with comedy. As he explains further, neither great vice nor great misery is a fit subject for ridicule; for crime should be attacked with weapons more potent, while the spectacle of misery derided is always unpleasant.⁴ Beyond this he specifies certain types of character suitable for comedy. They are "the morose, the superstitious, the suspicious, the boastful and the foolish";⁵ and in this statement he is more precise than Aristotle in his *Poetics*. Then, too, he distinguishes between the laughter caused by the mode of expression, and that resulting from the nature of the thought expressed. Amongst the former he mentions the use of ambiguous or unexpected turns of speech, as when, for instance, one thing is looked for and another thing said; or again, there is the use of puns, of a play upon words, or the literal interpretation of a statement otherwise intended.⁶ Of comic effects arising out of the thought, he specifies those caused by deceiving expectation, by the use of caricature or com-

¹ *De Opt. Gen. Or.* i.

² Cicero, *De re pub.* iv, 13, quoted by the *Excerpta de Comoedia* (Wessner ed. of Donatus, i, 22).

³ *De Orat.* ii, 236.

⁴ *Ibid.* 237.

⁵ *Ibid.* 251.

⁶ *Ibid.* 247-63.

parison with something ugly or disgraceful; or again, others due to irony or an assumed simplicity or to a union of discordant particulars.¹ But humour of this kind, he points out, is of infinite variety; and a sense of *decorum* must be the guide throughout, lest the humour degenerate into mere buffoonery. In these remarks on "the ludicrous" Cicero embodies doctrine apparently derived from Aristotle, though whether at first-hand is somewhat doubtful. What he gives is Aristotle in a more extended form, with elements drawn possibly from some post-Aristotelian authority. And since something of the same treatment is found also in the *Tractatus Coislinianus* (a work dealt with later),² it is possible that both Cicero and the author of the *Tractatus* made use of the same intermediate source or sources, if indeed Cicero was not indebted directly to the *Tractatus* itself.³

There yet remains to notice Cicero's critical work of a judicial kind, those attempts at passing judgment on the literature of his own and preceding ages. And, to begin with, must be noted the principle he lays down as his basis for forming judgment. He is replying in *Brutus* to the question whether in matters of oratory the public at large or the specialist is the final court of appeal; and, following Aristotle, he insists on the importance of the wider tribunal. For oratory, he explains, must appeal above all to the many. "The ears of the people", he states,⁴ "are the instruments on which the orator has to play" (*oratori populi aures tibiae sunt*); and to what degree an audience is affected must be left to the decision of the audience as a whole. Moreover the artistic appeal must make itself felt naturally, without calling for the aid of theoretical training or study. "Art", wrote Cicero,⁵ "being derived from nature, seems to have effected nothing at all, if it does not move and delight naturally" (*nisi natura moveat ac delectet*); and the impression of the public is necessarily the test of this broad human appeal. The verdict of the connoisseur, it is true, is not without its value, especially in forming judg-

¹ *De Orat.* II, 264-90.

² See pp. 138-43 *infra*.

³ See J. F. D'Alton, *op. cit.* pp. 362-4 for further details.

⁴ *Brut.* LI, 192.

⁵ *De Orat.* III, 197.

ment of abstruse poems and the like.¹ He may, for instance, discuss artistic causes or analyse artistic effects; but even so, the judgment of the many is not without its weight. For an adequate judgment in oratory, however, the recognition of the general Cicero regards as of the first importance; and here he lays down a truth of a profound kind, and one that with some reservations is applicable to all the arts.

Apart from this, however, Cicero by his methods of forming judgment marks a new stage in the development of judicial criticism, and at the same time presents to his contemporaries some useful estimates of earlier literary achievement. As might be expected, he is for the most part concerned with oratory and style; but his discernment in these matters is no less sure than his grasp of principle, and his works in consequence are full of sane and penetrating judgments. Not a little of his success is due, in the first place, to his use of the comparative method, which he employs with a shrewd sense of its aims and value. Avoiding for the most part that trick of mechanical comparison which sought for meaningless Latin parallels to representative Greek writers, and which was to prove the bane of Latin criticism, he brings together authors for a specific purpose, that of disengaging their qualities by means of comparison and contrast; and the results are some of his most illuminating appreciations. This, for instance, is seen in his comparisons of Antonius and Crassus, and of Crassus and Scaevola;² though the method is used effectively elsewhere in his works. Then, too, he understands the importance of the historical factor in criticism, the necessity for placing each author in his proper environment and for taking long views in artistic matters, if the real nature of each performance is to be rightly appreciated. Thus in one place he lays down the principle of development in the arts. "No art", he states, "was invented and perfected at the same time" (*nihil est simul et inventum et perfectum*);³ and he gives it as his opinion that poets had flourished before Homer. In such views he had been preceded by Aristarchus in his Homeric criticism; and with Polybius had come a new outlook on history. But Cicero's immediate inspiration

¹ *Brut.* LI, 191.

² *Ibid.* XXXIX-XL.

³ *Ibid.* XVIII, 71.

would seem to have been the *Liber Annalis*, a sketch of universal history written by his friend Atticus, which had provided him in dark days with a fresh view of the past.¹ And it is in *Brutus* that Cicero makes the most effective use of this method, for there he is verifying his doctrines by an appeal to history; and as a result, judicial criticism from being dogmatic becomes for the first time historical, the notion of time being brought to bear in forming judgment. In that work he traces the development of oratory from the days of Pericles to his own, sketching briefly Attic eloquence, its growth and decline, then passing in review a host of Roman orators, from the venerable Cato to Hortensius and Calvus, contemporaries of his own, and including in his survey a number of orators of whom but little is known from other sources. All this is history, but it is criticism as well; for his account is full of helpful appreciations in which the characteristic qualities of each orator are lightly sketched, their performances at the same time being also discussed in relation to their times and conditions. And in the course of the survey Cicero implies certain ideas concerning oratory and literature in general, ideas not without their bearing on the critical process. In the first place he suggests the continuity of literature; that works of oratory and of literature generally are not isolated phenomena, but products related to one another, influenced it is true by passing conditions, but witnessing in a larger perspective to the workings of evolution, and to phases of growth, maturity, and decline. It was a conception hinted at by Aristotle in his treatment of the drama, but seriously applied for the first time in this work of Cicero. Furthermore, he makes plain the relativity of aesthetic standards; in passing judgment he takes into account the conditions of each age, and refuses for instance to judge Cato as if he had been a contemporary of his own. In all art, he recognises, there is an element of change. Thucydides, he states, would have written differently had he lived in a later age;² and elsewhere he puts forward as an obvious but significant truth that "almost every age had produced its own peculiar style of speaking" (*aetates extulerunt singulae singula prope genera dicendi*).³

¹ *Brut.* III, 13.² *Ibid.* I.XXXIII, 288.³ *De Orat.* II, 92.

Of his actual literary appreciations there is this to be said, that while of secondary importance as compared with his exposition of theory, they nevertheless give evidence of considerable critical acumen, and point the way to later developments in the same field. It is his judgments on oratory or prose style that naturally command most attention; and indeed on poetry he has but little to say. He appreciates, for instance, the workmanship of Aratus and Nicander; the former being praised for his polished and excellent verses, the latter for his poetic skill (*facultas*).¹ But he fails to see the merits of the new contemporary school of poets, merely alluding to them in scoffing terms as *cantores Euphorionis*.² With him, it is clear, the traditions of Ennius and Pacuvius still prevail; and this is shown by the numerous quotations drawn from their works, which have the merit of preserving some valuable fragments of their writings. Terence, too, he praises for his choice and elegant diction; while he also commends his general charm and his avoidance of elements of farce.³ On Lucretius, however, his sole comment is of a superficial kind;⁴ and he shows no sense of the greatness of the poet's achievement. While, however, there are but few traces of reasoned judgments on poetry in his works, of appreciations of oratory his pages are full; and in particular his review of the styles of preceding Roman orators in *Brutus* is of considerable value. There as elsewhere in dealing with Roman oratory, he perhaps errs on the side of indulgence. In speaking of Cato, the Gracchi, Antonius, and the rest, he is moved by a patriotic fervour, mingled with regrets for the past; and he is apt to exaggerate the qualities of his countrymen, and to turn a blind eye to their defects. Yet, even so, his estimates are characterised by a freshness and directness which mark in general his critical manner. For his tests throughout are no pedantic rules, but the effects of the oratory, its appeal to human

¹ *De Orat.* i, 69.

² *Tusc. Disp.* iii, xix, 45.

³ See Cicero's epigram in Suetonius, *Life of Terence*, c. 5, where Caesar also describes Terence as "half-Menander", famed for purity of diction, but lacking in *vis comica*.

⁴ *Ep. ad Quint. Frat.* ii, 9 (11), 3; see Saintsbury, *History of Criticism*, i, 214 ff. for a comment on this remark. Sounder appreciations of Lucretius (noted by Saintsbury) are found in Ovid, *Amor.* i, 15, 25 and Statius, *Silv.* ii, 7, 76.

nature; and he contrives to leave with his readers some clear impressions of the various stylists. Less original are probably his comments on the Greeks, for here he is traversing ground that had previously been worked; and his terse summary of the distinctive qualities of the several Attic orators—the sweetness (*suavitas*) of Isocrates, the artful simplicity (*subtilitas*) of Lysias, the acuteness (*acumen*) of Hyperides, and the force (*vis*) of Demosthenes¹—has the air of being little more than a series of critical commonplaces. More characteristic of Cicero himself, both in manner and matter, are the comments he makes on the chief varieties of style, remarks often thrown out in passing, but full of good things, sound sense and keen insight. He points out, for instance, the naturalness and persuasiveness of the plain style of oratory, that style, seemingly so easy though nothing is more difficult, with its “artfulness”, its “careful negligence” (*neglegentia diligens*), like that of women when unadorned adorned the most;² or again, the sublime force of the grand style, with its compelling power that takes captive men’s minds, forcing or stealing its way into the senses.³ A fondness for thus discriminating between varieties of style was to be characteristic of later critics; but few are more effective than Cicero in his descriptions. And this was partly due to his picturesque treatment, to the use he makes of analogies and metaphors drawn from various sources, from the sister arts, human physiology, moral qualities and the like. When therefore he speaks of a “full-blooded” style, a “nervous” style, or a “raw unmellowed style newly-drawn from the vat”, he is not only adding colour to his expression, he is also inaugurating a device that was to add to the power of critical appreciation, and that has become a feature of art-criticism at the present day. And in this and other extensions of the critical vocabulary lay some of his services to criticism generally.

These, then, are among the main aspects of Cicero’s work as a critic; and it was work, which, while forming but one section of his many-sided intellectual activities, was surpassed by none in intrinsic or historical interest. Throughout it runs a unity of purpose. It was the counterpart to that great gift of his to later

¹ *De Orat.* III, 28.² *Orat.* XXIII, 76–8.³ *Ibid.* XXVIII, 97.

ages, that unique style which was to form a vehicle of thought for modern Europe; and, as such, it represents an unbroken effort to set forth his guiding principles in art, and to vindicate by reason what he had previously done by instinct. Its main interests are consequently those of rhetoric or style. With matters of poetry he has but little concern; and significant of this is that dictum of his, that if his life were doubled he would still have insufficient time for reading lyric poetry.¹ Nor is his primary object the judgment or appreciation of literature; though his appreciations of oratory have at least this interest, that they represent, what is always acceptable, an artist's judgments on his own craft. In addition to this they may be said to mark an advance in critical method. They reveal for one thing a fruitful use of the method of comparison; and, what is more, they give evidence also of the historical sense, of that genetic conception of literature which was to prove centuries later a solvent of fixed and dogmatic standards.

It is in his theories of rhetoric or prose style, however, that the real nature of his contribution to the critical development is most clearly seen. And there is found the theorising of an artist, who was also a psychologist and a scholar, one whose practical skill amounting to genius, and whose technical knowledge, were alike transformed by a living insight into human nature, and enriched by an acquaintance with the best thought of antiquity. Of his penetrating intelligence, his keen artistic sensibility, his unfailing insight into the great simple truths of art, there can be no doubt; nor can the soundness of his methods be questioned. For in spite of a profound respect for the teaching of authority, he bases his arguments on the requirements of "nature" or "reason", thus endorsing authority; and his treatment throughout is of a severely practical kind. Of the larger philosophical criticism his work has but few traces. Like Ennius's Neoptolemus, Cicero philosophises but little, "since to be absolutely a philosopher was not agreeable to him".² And apart from this, speculation as such was alien to his Roman temperament; he arrives at his principles by observation and reasoning, and he writes with the

¹ Seneca, *Ep.* 49, 5.

² *De Orat.* II, 156.

needs of the age ever before him. Nor does he omit to make his teaching attractive; for in his efforts to avoid the dogmatic mechanical methods of the text-books, he sets out his doctrine in popular fashion, in a form intelligible to plain men, with all the skill of a practised pleader and with the added grace of an accomplished orator. His object in short was to win the minds of his readers; and while his works thus form part of isagogic literature, those popular "introductions" to the various "arts" which became a convention at Rome, they represent also an extension of the critical media. That his presentment of his doctrine, on the other hand, was not without its defects, is perhaps a point that will be generally conceded. In thus writing for the general he was following the Platonic tradition; but it is clear that he follows Plato at a distance. For he fails to recapture wholly Plato's happy grace, and in comparison with the work of the great master there is at times something laboured in his treatment. Nor does he quite succeed in his proposed objective, which was that of depicting the ideal orator. And Quintilian in one place complains of his failure in this respect, how that he "shortened sail and rowed a slower stroke"¹ when he came to the business of actual description. The truth is that what he offers are merely his own practical views, the fruit of his experience; but with these, it may be added, posterity may well be content.

And indeed Cicero's contribution to literary criticism cannot but be regarded as of substantial and permanent value. In an age of disintegration, artistic confusion, and unrest, he first held up the mirror to antiquity; and by means of a sustained constructive effort he recalled to his contemporaries the sane ideals and standards of the past. What he aimed at primarily was an adaptation of Hellenic doctrine to the needs of Rome; and with a wise eclecticism he drew freely on all the great teachers, selecting and interpreting, and in the end producing a new body of doctrine. Thus does he warm into new life many of the earlier commonplaces; and in making Greek thought dynamic in the Roman world he corrects abuses and enlarges the vision of his contemporaries. But he also does more than this. In the

¹ *Inst. Orat.* XII, Intr. 4.

larger perspective of the critical development he is the first to lay down that in matters of art, the classical, and not the Hellenistic, Greeks were the guides to follow; and he thus presents a conception of classicism stripped of Hellenistic accretions, and therefore more truly representative of the highest art. It is in this sense that he may be said to have marked the beginning of a classical reaction; and herein perhaps lay the most far-reaching effects of his criticism. "To bring into unity the scattered work of a critic", wrote Sainte-Beuve, "is as a rule difficult"; but with Cicero the task would seem to be easier than with most. He undoubtedly marks a turning-point in the history of criticism; and with him begins at Rome the re-statement of the classical creed.

CHAPTER II

CLASSICISM ESTABLISHED IN POETIC THEORY: PHILODEMUS AND HORACE¹

SO far we have been tracing the earliest critical activities at Rome. We have noted their almost exclusive concern with oratory and prose style, the search for sound principles amidst many distracting influences, and the definite impulse finally given to the classical tradition in art. With the close of the Ciceronian age there emerged yet another phase of the critical development which was to prove even more decisive in its effects than the preceding. The Augustan era (31 B.C.—A.D. 14) which followed, witnessed a further triumph of the literary movement under the influence of Hellenism. With it there dawned a golden age of poetry, an age made glorious by the achievements of Virgil and Horace, Propertius, Tibullus and Ovid; and for the time being, the main intellectual interests became those of poetry and the poetic art, while a new status was being given to poets and men of letters generally. At the same time there were certain factors that contributed to a quickening of the critical impulse. The preceding period had not been wholly devoid of poetic theories; but what had come down were in general but slight and conflicting statements. Now, however, fresh impetus was given to the discussion of literary questions by various developments of a social and intellectual kind; and in addition certain urgent questions relating to poetry were forcing themselves on the attention of all thinking men. Hence the new trend of critical activities, which were now extended to the field of poetry, and which with Horace attained results of an outstanding and permanent kind.

¹ *Texts and Translations.* PHILODEMUS: C. Jensen, *Philodemus über die Gedichte* (*funftes Buch*), Berlin, 1923. HORACE: *Satires*, ed. A. Palmer, London and New York, 1883; *Epistles* (including *Ars Poetica*), ed. A. S. Wilkins, London and New York, 1885; *Satires, Epistles and Ars Poetica*, ed. (with trans.) H. R. Fairclough (Loeb Lib.), London and New York, 1929; *Ars Poetica*, ed. A. Rostagni, Torino, Chiantore, 1930; trans. A. S. Cook (with the poetical treatises of Vida and Boileau), Boston, 1892; trans. T. A. Moxon (Everyman's Lib.), London, 1934; extracts from *Ars Poetica* (trans.), in *Saintsbury, Loci Critici*, pp. 54–8.

For a proper understanding of the critical work of Horace, however, something must first be said of the conditions under which he wrote, and of the influences which went to determine the nature of his work. And in the first place, not without its significance is the increased prestige attached to poets and poetry during this Augustan period. With the passing of the Republic had gone many of the old-time prejudices, and among them, to a large extent, the earlier suspicion of art, and the contempt of men of action for the poet's craft. Under the new régime a fresh dignity was accorded to poetry; something of magic was implied in terms like *vates* and *carmen* which were now restored. And from being little more than a passing distraction, a mere trifling of *dilettanti*, poetry came to be regarded as one of the noblest of occupations, a pursuit not unworthy of serious-minded Romans, and something that counted in the life of the state. For this the altered conditions of society were in some measure responsible. With political life at Rome now centred in the personality of Augustus, there was less scope than before for attaining distinction in public life. The avenue of war was closed, political eloquence had been suppressed, while eloquence in the law-courts was no longer needed; and it was therefore to literature alone that men of parts could look for recognition and advancement, a fact which led to a revision of values, of literature generally, and of poetry in particular. Then, too, the attitude of Augustus was not without its effect on the situation; for whereas Caesar had discovered that poets could be troublesome foes, Augustus was the first to realise the value of their support in the affairs of state. With him began a more generous patronage, which gave to poets a new social status and security; and the rôle of patron was played also by men of influence like Maecenas, Pollio, and Messalla, who gathered around them circles of literary men for social intercourse. Thus was the position of poets raised in the public mind, and with it the estimation of their craft; and in consequence a new trend was given to critical activities.

Among the influences that made for critical discussions at this date, however, none was of greater importance than the impetus given by those literary coteries then forming, of which

the most active was that under the patronage of Augustus and Maecenas. Into that circle at an early date was drawn a group of brilliant young *littérateurs* who were to assist materially in transforming the literary outlook at Rome. They came from Naples where, it would seem,¹ a school of humanistic studies had lately been founded by Greek men of letters—rhetoricians, philosophers, historians, and poets—whom the exigencies of the time had driven westward from Alexandria, Pergamum, and Antioch. And, at the “garden-school” of that place, under Siro, Parthenius, and notably Philodemus, the young scholars had acquired a liberal education, compared with which the practical rhetorical training of Rome was little more than a dull and a deadening routine. Among the group were Virgil and Varius, Plotius, and Quintilius Varus, all of whom had come under the spell of the place; and their arrival at Rome meant an influx of new ideas, which infused fresh life into literary discussion. To their number was subsequently added Horace, who in the meantime had come under the same influences at the house of Lucius Piso Caesonius, friend and patron of Philodemus. And when further there had been attracted to their circle some of the more active spirits at Rome, including Pollio, Gallus, Propertius, and Apollodorus, the aged teacher of Augustus, in this way was set up an unofficial academy of literature, capable of discussing all questions of literary standards, and influential by reason of its powerful patrons. Nor were these the only factors that helped in the fresh start that was being made in the criticism of poetry at Rome; there were other considerations which counted, as, for instance, the practice of recitation instituted by Pollio for the purpose of criticising a poet’s work before publication. That this practice went far towards making criticism fashionable can scarcely be doubted; though it led also to many exhibitions of bad taste and futile judgment, as Horace points out in one of his *Epistles*.² And in addition there were not wanting features in the literature of the time that claimed attention, one being the matter raised also by Horace, when he deplored the indiscriminate scribbling that went on.³

¹ See Tenney Frank, *Vergil*, pp. 139 ff.

² *Ep.* I, xix, 35 to end.

³ *Ep.* II, i, 117.

Most decisive of all in giving direction to the new criticism were, however, the main literary questions in the air at the time; and here without a doubt lay the root of the whole business. The chief question at issue was one relating to literary models; whether, broadly speaking, the ancient Greeks were to be followed, or the more modern Alexandrians who had inspired Catullus and his school. In addition, there were those who stood for the standards of the older Latin poetry; while others again were concerned with matters of poetic diction. All alike were important factors in the critical activities of the time; and they call for some amount of explanation. Of the importance of the Alexandrian tradition, in the first place, there can be little doubt; already by the middle of the first century B.C. it had established itself in Roman poetry. The *Erotopaegnon* of Laevius had been succeeded by the erotic elegies of Tigidas in honour of Perilla, and still later, by the "romantic" mythological stories of Catullus and Calvus, Cornificius and Cinna, the last-mentioned being the author of the poem *Zmyrna* to which was devoted the scrupulous polish of nine years. This was the set of poets—Bibaculus and Varro of Atax also among their number—whom Cicero had derided as *cantores Euphorionis*; and the works of all alike were characterised by features distinctly Alexandrian, an erudition that was often obscure, caprice in form and expression, novelty in methods of narration, an inward treatment of moods and emotions, and above all a meticulous workmanship, together with an attitude of detachment from actual life. Thus set in a tendency to discard the ampler forms of epic and dramatic poetry in favour of miniature epics, amatory and mythological elegies, epithalamia, and epigrams; and at the same time a new spirit entered Roman poetry, a spirit artificial, erotic, and subjective, that was widely at variance with the larger utterances of ancient Greece. Nor did this triumph of Alexandrianism cease with the age of Catullus. For in the decade that followed, Caesar's passion for Cleopatra and her presence at Rome for two years before his death, added considerably to Alexandrian influences, and succeeded in rendering Alexandrian art more fashionable than ever. And the tradition continued throughout

the Augustan era, the new poetry on its own merits finding ample response under altered conditions. It was from the ranks of the new poets that Virgil for one emerged, his early work showing clear traces of Alexandrian inspiration; Gallus, again, followed closely in the steps of Catullus; and the elegies too of Tibullus and Propertius, together with the works of Ovid, were abundantly reminiscent of Alexandrian art. Such then was this Alexandrian influence on the Roman poetry of the time. It was widespread and persistent, it affected the best poets; and it constituted a direct challenge to the orthodox literary methods, which had hitherto been largely based on the models of classical Greece.

At the same time under Augustus another important stream of influence had begun to make itself felt; and it was one that turned men's eyes anew to the forms and methods of the ancient Greeks, and made in the end for a classical revival. As to the origin of this movement, more than one explanation has been offered. In the first place, it has been attributed, unconvincingly, to political causes, to the hostility felt by Augustans, with their strong Caesarian sympathies, for Catullus and other representatives of the earlier generation. By others, again, it has been more plausibly described as a recoil from a current fashion in literature, a natural reaction against the distasteful "romanticism" of the neoteric poets; and Horace's so-called sneer against Catullus and Calvus¹ has usually been quoted in support of this notion. In that passage, however, Horace's satire seems to be directed, not so much against Catullus and his school, as against an ape-like grammarian who was skilled in nothing but in chanting the new poetry. It is in fact the limited attainments of the unnamed rather than any objectionable features in Catullus's verse, that give point to the remark. So that neither here nor elsewhere in Horace can any clear disparagement of the earlier school be found. And, for the rest, of the other Augustan poets who added lustre to their age, all were admirers and to some extent imitators of the new Alexandrian art, and as such could have been no party to a

¹ *Sat.* I, x, 18-19; see E. K. Rand, "Catullus and the Augustans" (*Harv. St. in Class. Phil.* xvii, p. 28).

deliberate rejection of that art.¹ On the other hand, the real cause of the new classicism may more probably be found in the "spirit of the age", in that sudden awakening of national feeling that marked the Augustan era. By this time Rome had become a great world-power, entering on a reign of peace, and fired with a sense of a great national mission. And now, once again, as formerly at Athens, poetry aimed at voicing the feelings of the community and at singing of things that came home to the hearts of all. To this task both Horace and Virgil devoted themselves, inspired by the theme of the greatness of Rome. Thus they sang of the passing of unrest and passion, of the joys of peace and a benevolent rule at Rome; they sang also of Roman victories, of Roman piety and virtue, of the long and painful travail of Roman greatness; and, filled with a faith in her ultimate destiny, they sang too of a golden age to come, thus putting into words the deepest longings of a people. For themes such as these the new poetic moulds were inadequate. Those forms and devices, which had sufficed for a picturesque handling of mythological fancy, or for trifling with the conceits and sentiments of love, were obviously no fit instruments for sounding the deeper notes. And both Virgil and Horace reverted therefore to the classical tradition, to the epic models of Homer, and the lyrical modes of Alcaeus and Sappho; and in this way was inaugurated a classical revival which was essentially an attempt to recapture the high seriousness of Greek classical art. Such, then, would seem to be the effective causes of the new classicism; but however this may be, and whatever its real origin, its importance in the critical development is manifest. For one thing it raised anew the question of "the Ancients and the Moderns", since with the success of the Alexandrian vein of poetry, a clash between the two schools had otherwise become inevitable; and in addition, it gave direction to much of the subsequent theorising, which ended finally in a re-statement of the classical creed.

The conflict between these two traditions must then be described as the all-important critical matter at this date. But

¹ See E. K. Rand, "Catullus and the Augustans" (*Harv. St. in Class. Phil.* xvii, pp. 15-30).

there were other problems as well, of lesser significance perhaps; and for one thing there were the attempts made by an archaising party to set up as their literary touchstones the standards of the older Latin poetry. With Varro had come a revival of antiquarian studies at Rome; though Augustus later on also fostered the movement, in his efforts to direct men's thoughts to the origins of Rome. And among the earlier achievements in which men took legitimate pride was the poetry of Ennius, Naevius, and the rest, reminiscences of which were embodied in the works of Cicero and Virgil. The taste for such literature was however soon overdone, preposterous claims being advanced for everything archaic, even for such texts as the Laws of the XII Tables.¹ And this tendency was encouraged by the attitude of the grammarians, who, partly from sheer pedantry, partly also from jealousy of contemporary poets,² professed to admire only what had been consecrated by time, and in such work alone found the true literary standards. The position was one that naturally provoked criticism; and evidence is not wanting that the matter was discussed with some spirit at the time. In addition to this, however, there arose a language problem, an inquiry into what constituted the proper diction of poetry. From the earliest times it had been the practice at Rome to make use of Greek words where necessary, to enrich the language by borrowings and coinages, and to revive on occasion words of an archaic kind. In the meantime, however, objection had been raised to this procedure, Caesar in one place laying down the rule that "a strange or unusual word should be avoided as one would a rock".³ And now at this date a school of purists arose, inspired possibly by the Atticists, who had previously argued for purity of speech; and the aim of this school, which was that of inculcating in poetry a purer Latinity, also found echoes in the criticism of the time.

With this then as the background of Augustan critical activities we turn now to a consideration of that criticism itself, beginning with some remarks on earlier attempts at poetic criticism at Rome. Previous to this there had apparently been

¹ Hor. *Ep.* II, i, 23.

² Cf. Hor. *Ep.* I, xix, 35 ff.

³ Gellius, *Noctes Atticae*, I, 10, 4.

but little of the nature of serious criticism, apart, that is, from the rhetorical studies already mentioned. Sporadic pronouncements on poetry, at any rate, are all that have come down, stray fragments to all appearances of an earlier body of theory; and while some of those fragments have already been mentioned, yet another place of interest is that where Lucretius incidentally gives his view of the function of poetry. He is explaining his reasons for adopting poetic form for his great work, and he advances the doctrine of profit and pleasure. Just as physicians, argued Lucretius,¹ were wont to sweeten with honey the cup of bitter wormwood, so he himself had set forth his reasoning in Pierian verse, tinged as it were with the honey of the Muses; and the comparison was one that in various forms—the gilded pill and others—was adopted by Renaissance writers, to illustrate their doctrine of the moralistic function of poetry. Yet more illuminating as to the nature of pre-Augustan activities is, however, that section of the work of Philodemus of Gadara that has survived, with its witness to the discussions of earlier doctrines that went on at Rome about the middle of the first century B.C. Concerning the part played by Philodemus in the educational life of the time—his connexion with the Piso family, and with the “garden-school” at Naples—something has already been said;² and reference has also been made to the finding of certain of his works at the Herculanean villa of Lucius Piso Caesonius, the result of excavations begun in the eighteenth century and not yet completed.³ Among the papyri thus recovered were a number of Epicurean writings, critical discussions on various branches of learning, some dedicated to Piso himself, and including fragments of works on rhetoric (*περὶ ῥητορικῆς*) and music (*περὶ μουσικῆς*), as well as a disquisition on the art of poetry (*περὶ ποιημάτων*); and it is to the recovered portions of Book v of his work *On Poems* that we are specially indebted for light on the critical position. From these fragments it has been gathered⁴ that Philodemus was here

¹ *De Nat. Rerum*, I, 936–50.

² See p. 49 *supra*.

³ See vol. I, 170.

⁴ See C. Jensen, *op. cit.* and A. Rostagni, *Arte Poetica di Orazio*, pp. lxxxiii–cvii, for a valuable treatment of Philodemus to which I am indebted for the account that follows.

discussing the opinions of certain earlier grammarians on the nature of "the good poet" and "the good poem"; and since each discussion began with a statement of the critical opinion in question, the result was a valuable collection of doctrines which goes to supplement our knowledge of earlier Hellenistic theorising. Thus we learn, in a greater or less degree, of the views of Praxiphanes of Rhodes, of Ariston of Chios, Crates of Mallos, Demetrius of Byzantium, besides less familiar grammarians like Andromenides and Heracleodorus; while of the work of Neoptolemus of Parium, who is discussed at yet greater length, a fairly clear general notion may be formed. And herein perhaps lies the real and permanent value of the work; it helps in reconstructing some of the earlier doctrines.

At the same time the critical comments of Philodemus are by no means without their interest; for they reveal an Epicurean philosopher discussing freely the doctrines of Stoics and Peripatetics alike, and occasionally throwing light on the weaknesses of their poetic creeds. Thus to begin with, he recalls with approval Neoptolemus's refusal to consider poetry as mere verbal expression apart from intellectual values, as earlier grammarians such as Heracleodorus had done. With Neoptolemus he agreed that subject-matter was also an indispensable factor, and that theme and form combined to produce the true effect of poetry.¹ On the other hand he also challenges the teaching of Neoptolemus in not a few particulars; and his views will be found to have considerable interest for modern readers. In the first place he denies outright the utilitarian end of poetry, and the contention that poetry was profitable in that it dealt with reality (*πράγματα*). He allows that Homer had dealt with reality; but then that poet had not written with specifically an educational end in view; and moreover it was not true to say that every representation of reality was of an elevating kind. Elsewhere Philodemus explains that "beautiful poems, if they edify, do not edify as poems" (*καὶν ὠφέλη, καθὸ ποιήματ' οὐκ ὠφέλει*);² and altogether it is clear that to him the element of edification was accidental to poetry as such. This,

¹ C. Jensen, *op. cit.* col. 9, ll. 25-7.

² C. Jensen, *op. cit.* col. 29, ll. 18 ff.

however, leads on in due course to another significant discussion on what constituted the subject-matter of poetry. According to Neoptolemus, that subject-matter consisted of real actions and deeds, of facts that existed in the historical, natural, or moral order of things. Philodemus, on the other hand, contended that such a limitation was not justified. Everything, he maintained, could be true in poetry, including themes fabulous and even false, monsters or legendary spirits, provided they were artistically represented, in concrete and vivid fashion (*ἐνάργεια*).¹ And for this view support was to be found in the work of the great Greek poets; while, apart from this, there was Aristotle's doctrine that poetic truth should not be confused with truth historical, logical, or moral. And in yet another respect does Philodemus criticise Neoptolemus's treatment of poetry, when he condemns the empirical threefold division of *ποίησις*, *ποίημα*, *ποιητής*, which had characterised his work. Neoptolemus, he maintained, had erred in considering form (*τὴν σύνθεσιν τῆς λέξεως*) apart from subject-matter (*τὰ διανοήματα*),² since both were bound together in inseparable fashion. Poetry was, in short, an organism in which form was determined by subject-matter; and a treatment of either in isolation he regarded as misleading and unscientific. For the rest, Philodemus's comments in the surviving fragments are mostly of a negative kind; they are incomplete and frequently obscure as well; so that it is not possible at this date to reconstruct anything like the main body of his theory. At the same time it is clear that his general attitude is one of scepticism to the critical teaching of his day, and to those scholastic tendencies which made for classifications and precepts in the treatment of poetry. And this fact is not without its interest, though the challenge was to have no effect on later writers. Earlier traditions were to survive, with some modifications, it is true; and the interest attached to Philodemus is therefore mainly of an incidental kind. He helps in some measure to fill in the picture of the Hellenistic critical activities; and in connexion with Neoptolemus he supplies information of unique value in the light of Horace's subsequent performance.

¹ C. Jensen, *op. cit.* col. 4, ll. 6ff.

² *Ibid.* col. 10, ll. 33ff.

All this then goes to suggest something of the nature and scope of pre-Augustan criticism of poetry at Rome. And it is eloquent not only of the poverty and confusion that prevailed, but also of the extent to which the teachings of Plato and Aristotle had by this time been either superseded or forgotten. With Horace (65–8 B.C.), however, a fresh beginning in criticism was made; and with him, it is hardly too much to say, began a new tradition. What Cicero had done in the sphere of rhetoric was now carried over by him into the realms of poetry. He recalled to men's minds the standards of classical art, while directing their steps back to the poetry of antiquity; and he undoubtedly stands out as the most influential of Roman critics, one who achieved results of a lasting kind, and was to rank in stature with Aristotle at the Renaissance. For the task of criticism he had been well equipped by his early education, first at Rome, and subsequently at Athens (45–44 B.C.), and not least, by his life-long efforts to perfect his own art. From the first he seems to have been a markedly conscious artist, with a definite theory of his own; and in his choice of models, his reasoned treatment of what he borrowed, can be seen the workings of a critical faculty which, while entering to some extent into all artistic creation, was yet present with Horace in an unusual degree. At an early date, moreover, he had found a place at the centre of things. By the year 39 B.C. he had won the friendship of the best poets of the day; and, introduced by Virgil and Varius to the notice of Maecenas, he became from then on a member of that famous circle, in close touch with a variety of cultured minds, and keenly alive to the immediate literary problems. Of that circle, indeed, he became ultimately the guiding spirit and spokesman; and much of his criticism was doubtless due to that connexion. But much was due to other causes as well. Throughout his poetry, for instance, there runs a critical strain, a criticism, that is, of contemporary manners, morals, politics, and thought; and the theme of literature naturally does not escape this treatment. Apart from this he was subject to detraction from various quarters, and these attacks drew from him more than one retort; while latterly there gathered around him a number of disciples, young men like Florus, the Pisos,

and others, who sought his guidance in literary matters, and as a consequence not a few of his critical utterances were directed to that end.

Literary criticism formed therefore an integral part of Horace's work. And for his contributions on the subject we must turn to the main body of his writings, and more especially to his *Satires* and *Epistles*, where much relevant matter will be found that goes to supplement his more formal pronouncements in the *Ars Poetica*. Of these several critical works the *Satires* came first; and in them may be recognised the first stage of Horace's critical activity, the prelude to the more important work that was to follow. As yet he was engaged with the more immediate problems. He himself had proposed to revive, with some difference, the Lucilian tradition in satire; and he is therefore concerned with such matters as the status of Lucilius and the true nature of satire, though evidence is not wanting of his views on poetry generally. In his first Book of *Satires* (35 B.C.), for instance, he writes what is practically a defence of satire,¹ in the course of which he puts forward his views on its origin and literary value, and comments further on the performance of Lucilius in that particular vein. Later on² he replies to a school of critics represented by Demetrius and Hermogenes Tigellius. Called to account for his strictures on Lucilius, he repeats and justifies his earlier judgment, revealing in so doing some of the main principles of his art. This represents perhaps the most significant of his earlier utterances, though passages of critical interest are not wanting elsewhere in the *Satires*. In the second Book of the *Satires*, for instance, there is his comment on the reforming function of satire,³ made in answer apparently to further attacks on his own practice. And indeed so far his critical work for the most part had consisted of a series of retorts to reigning critics.

At the same time in this earlier phase of Horace's critical activities there is much that is of positive interest. And to begin with, there is the attitude he adopts towards the new vogue for Lucilius which marked the Augustan age. He acknowledges that poet as master,⁴ for example, describes him as the first

¹ *Sat.* I, iv.² I, x.³ II, i.⁴ I, x, 47 ff.; II, i, 29.

Roman satirist in verse,¹ a worthy descendant of the old Greek comic poets;² and in particular, he praises his wit (*facetus*), his keen scent for abuses (*emunctae naris*),³ the efficacy of his satire in "rubbing the city down with plenty of salt",⁴ and his sincerity of utterance which had made of his work a mirror of his life.⁵ Yet this was not to say that Lucilius had possessed all the poetic virtues, any more than Laberius with his coarse and bitter *Mimes*. For one thing there was his hasty and imperfect workmanship, some two hundred lines being dictated within the hour and without changing his posture (*stans pede in uno*).⁶ And the result was a turbid (*lutulentus*) flow of words obscure and redundant, verses harsh and ill-formed,⁷ and a total lack of the restraint needed for urbane and delicate wit. Or again, there was his indiscriminate mingling of Greek and Latin words, a foolish trick of no artistic value;⁸ and, in addition, his unvarying tone, invective being his sole instrument of satire.⁹ That Lucilius had been successful in this new vein Horace readily allows; he regards him as more polished (*limatior*) than the earlier Latin poets.¹⁰ But his standards were still inadequate, his art imperfect; and "had he lived to-day", wrote Horace, "he would doubtless have pruned and polished his work".¹¹

Then, too, Horace incidentally expounds his theory of satire, which he regards as a new *genre* unknown to the Greeks (*Graecis intactum carmen*),¹² though essentially a development of the Old Comedy of Eupolis, Cratinus, and Aristophanes.¹³ Whether it was poetry in the strict sense of the term he refuses to say, merely noting that that was a dignity denied by some to comedy itself.¹⁴ Its main business, however, like that of the Old Comedy, was to attack those who deserved it; and with malicious censure and slander it had nothing to do. The true satirist, he maintained, was no threat to the community; he was no dangerous creature who "must needs carry hay on his horns".¹⁵ And if his function was thus mainly the correction of abuses, this was not brought about by invective alone. "A jest",

¹ II, i, 62.² I, iv, 5.³ I, iv, 7-8.⁴ I, x, 4.⁵ II, i, 30ff.⁶ I, iv, 10.⁷ I, iv, 11; I, x, 50.⁸ I, x, 20ff.⁹ I, x, 14-15.¹⁰ I, x, 65.¹¹ I, x, 69ff.; cf. Cicero's statement concerning Thucydides, p. 41 *supra*.¹² I, x, 66.¹³ I, iv, 1 ff.¹⁴ I, iv, 45, 63.¹⁵ I, iv, 25.

so Horace explains,¹ "is often more telling than the keenest of arguments" (*ridiculum acri fortius*); and this, he adds, was a device of the old comic poets which was worthy of imitation. Hence his insistence on the need for genial raillery in satire, and for a spirit of good humour in showing up abuses. And this treatment he distinguishes from that of the mere buffoon (the *βωμολόχος* of Greek theory)² who was wont to indulge in unmeasured and unseasonable laughter at the expense of friend and foe alike.³ Moreover, in satire he demands certain stylistic features, among which was a diction based on everyday speech (*sermoni propiora*),⁴ since satire like comedy dealt with themes of ordinary life. Then, too, he commends brevity and terseness of utterance to give point to the satirical attacks.⁵ And in addition he requires a variety of tone. The satirist, he points out, must move from grave to gay; he must simulate in turn the poet, the orator, and the wit (*urbanus*), employing all notes with a wise decorum.⁶

Nor in these earlier sporadic critical efforts of Horace can we fail to notice signs which foretell the later critic. First and foremost is his demand for perfect finish in poetry. This emerges from his remarks on the defects of Lucilius; though it is also seen in the stress he lays on the need for corrections (*saepe stilum vertas*),⁷ in order to give to poetry value of a lasting kind. But these ideals are implied also in his remarks on contemporary poets and critics, whom he distinguishes in accordance with standards already present in his mind. Among the poets, for instance, he commends Fundanius for the quiet charm of his comedies, reminiscent in their way of Terence; Pollio he praises for tragedy, Varius for his epics, while Virgil is for him distinguished by the tenderness and grace (*molle atque facetum*) of his *Eclogues*.⁸ On the other hand he attacks with scorn the epic poet Bibaculus, parodying in one place his bombastic style, and ridiculing elsewhere his unspeakable conceit of Jupiter "bespewing with hoary snow the wintry Alps".⁹ And in keeping with this are his views on contemporary critics and

¹ I, x, 14-15.⁴ I, iv, 42.⁷ I, x, 72.² See vol. I, 151; p. 140 *infra*.⁵ I, x, 9-10.⁸ I, x, 40 ff.³ I, iv, 35, 82.⁶ I, x, 11 ff.⁹ II, v, 41 (tr. Fairclough).

criticism, when he contrasts the lofty standards of the circles of Maecenas, Pollio, and Messalla with those which prevailed among critics less scrupulous. Of the latter he denounces in particular the snarling Demetrius, the fawning Fannius; and the exquisite, Hermogenes Tigellius, both poet and singer, he describes as altogether ignorant of the great works of the Greeks.¹

Leaving now the first stage of Horace's critical activities we turn to those maturer efforts enshrined in his later *Epistles* which may be said to embody his main contribution of a critical kind. With Horace, it should be noted, the epistolary form had a special function; it was the medium he chose for a discussion of serious and weighty topics. And when after 23 B.C., with the completion of his earlier cycle of Odes (Books I, II and III), he abandoned for a time that lyrical vein of poetry and turned to other themes, it was the epistolary form that he adopted in this crisis of his intellectual development, giving consideration by that means to matters of a philosophical and a literary kind. Thus in 20 B.C. appeared his first Book of *Epistles*; and this was followed in due course by the *Epistle to Florus* (c. 20 B.C.), the *Epistle to Augustus* (14-13 B.C.), and the *Epistle to the Pisos*, or the *Ars Poetica* as it is more familiarly known, the actual date of which is uncertain. Of these, the *Epistle to Florus* and the *Epistle to Augustus* constitute the second Book of the *Epistles*; and with these two Books of *Epistles* it is proposed to deal first, as forming an interesting prelude or commentary on the teaching of the *Ars Poetica*.

From the first it is clear that Horace's rôle in these *Epistles* is a new one. He figures mainly as the guide and familiar friend of his younger contemporaries, giving occasional counsel on morals and literature; and the first Book of the *Epistles*, though concerned mostly with moral teaching, is by no means without its critical interest and value. Thus he begins by explaining his changed point of view with regard to both literature and life. He had already abandoned the lighter lyric poetry (*versus et cetera ludicra pono*);² and his aim henceforth, he states, was to study the more serious problems of life, and those

¹ I, x, 78ff., 90.

² *Ep.* I, i, 10.

things that made for civic and national greatness. Hence his subsequent advice to Lollius Maximus, for instance, as to the value of Homer's teaching, which he describes as wiser than that of philosophers.¹ Then too he inquires into the literary activities of the staff of Tiberius, away at the time on an Armenian expedition; and in giving advice to each member he reveals at the same time some of his animating literary principles. Thus, in reminding the young poets of his earlier injunctions, he asks whether they are treating "high-serious" matters of national import,² and whether Titius, greatly daring in his imitation of Pindar, is adapting his Theban measures to the Roman lyre.³ Celsus, again, he warns against a slavish copying of earlier models;⁴ and to Florus he commends the study of philosophy as a guide to true wisdom. Similar themes are handled in his letter to Maecenas where he replies to the charges brought against his earlier *Epodes* and *Odes*, namely, that they lacked originality and were mere copies of the Greek. He there explains his ideas of imitation true and false, claiming for himself a true originality, and stating that he had "followed slavishly in the tracks of none" (*non aliena meo pressi pede*).⁵ Moreover, he adds, his generous use of Greek models, in accordance with the rules of Sappho and Alcaeus, had familiarised Rome with a new poetry; and the hostility of critics, *grammatici* and others, he explains as due to his refusal to resort to unworthy methods of winning approval.

It is in the "literary" *Epistles* of the second Book, however, that poetry is most consistently treated, the subject of both *Epistles* of that Book being one and the same, namely, the need for fostering a new school of Latin poetry based on the classical literature of the Greeks. In the *Epistle to Florus* (*Ep.* II, II), for instance, probably dated about 20 B.C., Horace gives his reasons for leaving behind him his earlier poetic activities. He complains of failing powers, the distractions of life at Rome; and he also ridicules the system of log-rolling that prevailed among poets (*genus irritabile vatum*)⁶ in their efforts to attain fame in the poetic sphere. Such an atmosphere, he maintained, was the

¹ I, II, 3-4.² I, III, 7 ff.³ I, III, 101 ff.⁴ I, III, 15 ff.⁵ I, XIX, 22.⁶ II, II, 102.

negation of criticism, and was fatal to true poetry, which required for its creation unfailing judgment and constant hard work. "Your good poet", he states, "when he begins to write will assume also the spirit of an honest censor" (*cum tabulis animum censoris sumet honesti*).¹ He will exercise judgment in his choice of words, discarding those that are undignified, bringing back old-fashioned picturesque terms once used by Cato and Cethegus, adopting new words that had been sanctioned by usage (*usus*) or custom, at the same time raising language to a higher power by processes of pruning and refining. All this, he held, meant persistent labour and toil; and yet it was necessary that the artistic effort should be concealed. In short, "the true poet", he added, "while straining every nerve, would yet give the appearance of being merely at play" (*ludentis speciem dabit et torquebitur*).²

Of yet greater significance is the famous *Epistle to Augustus* (*Ep.* II, i), probably written in 14-13 B.C., and the outcome apparently of a letter of Augustus to Horace complaining that none of the poet's earlier *sermones* had been addressed to him.³ Here Horace supplies the omission, and takes the opportunity at the same time of uttering a plea yet more direct on behalf of the new school of poetry. A beginning is made with a complaint concerning the wrong standards then current for judging poetry; how none but the oldest Latin poetry was wont to be valued, even the Twelve Tables being described as an utterance of the Muses.⁴ It was claimed, for instance, that the best work of the Greeks had been the earliest; and similar merit was therefore attached to the earliest Roman literature. But, as Horace points out, such a preference was based on a false analogy, since different national geniuses developed on different lines;⁵ and moreover, age in itself was no criterion of literary value, while the dividing line between what was ancient and what was not was difficult to fix.⁶ Nor does he fail to give instances of the conventional estimates of his contemporaries.

¹ II, ii, 110. This forms part of Dr Johnson's motto for his famous Dictionary.

² II, ii, 124.

³ Quoted by Suetonius, *Life of Horace*, pp. 486-8 (Loeb ed.).

⁴ II, i, 24 ff.

⁵ II, i, 28 ff.

⁶ II, i, 34 ff.

Ennius, for instance, was described as a second Homer;¹ Pacuvius was said to be learned (*doctus*), Accius lofty (*altus*); Afranius was likened to Menander, Plautus with his bustling plots to Epicharmus; whereas Caecilius was held to be conspicuous for his dignity (*gravitas*), and Terence for his art. All such estimates, however, so Horace maintained, were unbalanced judgments. What needed saying was that at times their styles were out-of-date (*antique*) or harsh (*dure*), or even flat (*ignave*);² though elsewhere a striking expression or a neat turn might also be found. But to describe such works as beautiful, almost faultless, was merely absurd. Some amount of prejudice in their favour might be attributed to early associations; but the real animating cause lay deeper than this, and was described by Horace as prejudice of another kind. It was envy of contemporary poets, he asserted, that lay at the root of these extravagant judgments; and poetic achievements were condemned, not on aesthetic grounds, but because they were modern. But while this wholesale condemnation of contemporary literary standards was thus Horace's first main point in this *Epistle*, he goes on to add that a great opportunity then presented itself for establishing at Rome an exalted poetry which should be of service to the state. He recalls to begin with the wonderful artistic activities at Athens during the great age of Pericles after the stressful days of war; implying thereby that the conditions necessary for the production of great art were only then being realised at Rome, and that similar developments were to be looked for in the new reign of peace. It was true that the Roman genius, naturally serious and practical-minded, had but lately acquired artistic interests; but now there was no lack of enthusiasm for art. The whole community, he states, was animated with a craze for poetry; "unlearned and learned alike", adds Horace, "we all try our hands at writing poems" (*scribimus indocti doctique poemata passim*).³ And in this newly-found fervour for poets and poetry he saw an acquisition of strength to the state; for the poet by his way of living and his teaching alike was an inspiration to all. The tender, lisping, utterance of childhood he gently fashioned,⁴

¹ II, i, 50ff.² II, i, 66ff.³ II, i, 117.⁴ II, i, 126ff.

he led youth by kindly precepts, he told of noble actions firing men to emulation, he comforted the weak and sorrowful, and he interceded with the gods on behalf of men. Yet guidance was needed for this new movement. For native efforts unaided were wont to lead to abuse; and the scurrility that entered latterly into the rustic Fescennine verses is quoted by Horace as an example of this. Already however, he notes, such external aid had been effective, in the impulse that resulted when "captive Greece took captive her fierce conqueror" (*Graecia capta ferum victorem cepit*).¹ Inspiration had been drawn from the great Greek tragic poets; by translation and adaptation something of their tragic spirit had been revived at Rome. And indeed for tragedy, as Horace explains, the Roman, spirited and vigorous, was well endowed by nature, though as yet he had not acquired the ideal of correctness or the "art to blot" (*metuit lituram*).² In comedy on the other hand less success had been attained, in spite of the general opinion that the comic vein was easier than the tragic, seeing that it drew for its themes on ordinary everyday life. But, as Horace acutely explains,³ this was the very reason for its greater difficulty; for with the familiarity of the theme there went an imperious demand for verisimilitude and the like. And he illustrates his point by a reference to the defective workmanship of Plautus, more particularly of his characterisation. Nor is he of opinion that the stage-conditions of his day conduced to great achievements in comedy. In a vivid picture he brings before our eyes something of those conditions; the insistent clamour for all kinds of novelty, for bears and boxers, for spectacles and finery, for giraffes and white elephants.⁴ It was not that he underrated the power of the drama; on the contrary he has a lively consciousness of its stirring and magic qualities. But the suggestion is that it was not along those lines that success for the new poetry lay. It lay rather, in his opinion, in celebrating the merits of great men, in singing of heroic themes, as Virgil and Varius had done; and on behalf of such poets and their school Horace pleads for the powerful and generous patronage of

¹ II, i, 156.² II, i, 167. Cf. *labor lunae* A.P. 291.³ II, i, 169-70.⁴ II, i, 182 ff.

Augustus. In so doing he has outlined as it were his programme for the reform of poetry. He envisages a new poetry based on standards more lofty than those that were then current, a poetry inspired by the ancient Greeks and emulating their work in its formal perfection. Such a poetry, he maintained, had a civilising function, was in addition an ornament to the state; and as such it was eminently worthy of the support of statesmen.

Suggestive and valuable as these *Epistles* undoubtedly are, for the main body of Horace's theory, however, we must turn to the *Epistle to the Pisos* (the *Ars Poetica*), where the programme already outlined is to some extent filled in. The work is one that rivals Aristotle's treatise on poetry in the difficulties it presents; and our first business is therefore to consider those difficulties, some of which remain unsolved to the present day. And first there is the perplexing question of date; a matter not without its bearing on the interpretation of the poem. In general the work has been assigned to one of two different periods, either to the "lyrical interval" (23-17 B.C.) already mentioned, or to the closing years of Horace's life (10-8 B.C.); though the year 15 B.C. has also been suggested by way of compromise. Each of these hypotheses, however, presents its own peculiar difficulties; and no one of them can be said to meet all the facts of the case. In the first place all scholars are agreed that the *Ars Poetica* cannot have been written earlier than 23 B.C., when Horace embarked on his epistolary writings; and indeed, in both form and substance the work has much in common with the second Book of *Epistles*. But while there is this measure of agreement, opinions differ widely as to the actual placing of the work. There are those for instance who hold to the earliest possible date, that is, 20 B.C. or earlier. It has been urged,¹ with cogency it must be admitted, that the work was written before Virgil's death (19 B.C.), and before the appearance of his *Aeneid*; because otherwise it would be difficult, if not impossible, to account for the one perfunctory reference to Virgil² in a work which professed to treat of the principles

¹ O. Immisch, "Horazens Epistel über die Dichtkunst" (*Philologus*, xxiv, iii, 1932, p. 6).

² A.P. 55.

of poetry. The silence of Horace where Virgil is concerned is doubtless a point of substantial importance; and with regard to this argument and its bearing on the composition of the poem something will be said later. Less convincing, however, is the suggestion brought forward in confirmation of that earlier date, namely, that Horace's failure to deal with epic theory was due to the fact that Virgil at the time was engaged in writing his *Aeneid*, so that any exposition of epic theory would be premature if not disrespectful.¹ But this is surely to ignore the influences under which Horace was writing, and the force of the Aristotelian tradition which had confined the study of poetry in the main to that of the dramatic kinds alone. Nor is the attempt to assign the poem to the year 15 B.C.² any more satisfactory. The argument advanced is that the *sermones quosdam* which had excited the jealousy of Augustus and had elicited from Horace his *Epistle to Augustus*,³ must necessarily have been the *Epistle to Florus* (*Ep.* II, II) and the *Ars Poetica*. And since the *Epistle to Florus* appeared in c. 20 B.C. and the *Epistle to Augustus* in 14-13 B.C., it therefore followed that the *Ars Poetica* must have belonged to the intervening period, and more especially to the later part of that period, owing to the affinities of that work with the *Epistle to Augustus*; hence the date assigned, i.e. 15 B.C. But is it so certain that the *sermones quosdam* in question were the *Epistle to Florus* and the *Ars Poetica*, and these works alone; thus excluding the possibility of the first Book of *Epistles* being therein implied? This at any rate is the assumption of many scholars, mainly on the ground that that Book was not of sufficiently recent date to have been in the mind of Augustus at the time of writing.⁴ Yet the first Book of *Epistles* (20 B.C.) belongs to much the same date as the *Epistle to Florus*; and if the latter is included among the *sermones quosdam*, it is not easy to see how the former may be excluded. The truth would therefore seem to be that on the strength of this particular evidence it is not necessary to assume that the

¹ O. Immisch, *op. cit.* pp. 7-8.

² A. Rostagni, *Arte Poetica di Orazio*, pp. xviff.

³ See p. 63 *supra*.

⁴ See for example A. Rostagni, *op. cit.* pp. xvi, xviii ff.; H. R. Fairclough, *Horace: Satires, Epistles, Ars Poetica*, p. 392.

Ars Poetica was written before the *Epistle to Augustus*, or at some such date as 15 B.C.

At the same time there are not a few who support the later date, and would assign the work to Horace's latest years, that is, 10-8 B.C. In the main their case rests on the identity of the Pisos to whom the *Ars Poetica* is addressed; though here again there is a marked difference of opinion. Not without its significance in the first place is the evidence of the scholiast Porphyrio (third century A.D.) on this point. According to his statement the father of the youths addressed was Lucius Calpurnius Piso (48 B.C.-A.D. 32), consul in 15 B.C., absent abroad 13-11 B.C., under Tiberius a man of importance, who also had two sons, Lucius and Gaius. This traditional statement has however been challenged, for the most part by those who incline to an earlier date. Assuming that the poem belonged, for other reasons, to the year 20 B.C. or thereabouts, such critics have urged that the sons of Lucius Calpurnius Piso at that date would not have been old enough to warrant Horace's attention, which took the form of advice to young poets on the threshold of their career. Hence the contention that the family of Gnaeus Calpurnius Piso, who was *consul suffectus* in 23 B.C., was the one in question. Yet the grounds for the earlier date on which this theory mainly rests, are, as we have seen, by no means certain. And in addition there are other and weightier reasons for hesitating to accept the suggestion. For one thing there is the matter of personality, and again the absence of any indication of concern with the arts on the part of either father or family. Thus Gnaeus Piso, for instance, is known to have been an arrogant representative of the Republican party; his son Gnaeus under Tiberius was accused of poisoning Germanicus, and subsequently died by his own hand;¹ while nothing is known of their connexion with poets or poetry. As against this there is Porphyrio's evidence for stating that Lucius Calpurnius Piso was himself "a poet and a patron of liberal studies" (*ipse poeta fuit et studiorum liberalium antistes*);² characteristics which no doubt he had inherited from his father Lucius Piso Caesonius,

¹ See A. Rostagni, *op. cit.* xxi, ii.

² *Ibid.* xx.

consul in 58 B.C. The latter in fact was a well-known patron of both philosophers and poets; and closely associated with him was Philodemus of Gadara, fragments of whose writings have been discovered at Piso's Herculanean villa, and to whose lectures Horace, Virgil, and others were wont to listen. Moreover, traces of Philodemus's influence, in a modified form it is true, will be found in Horace's poem; so that altogether there is a strong case for accepting Porphyrio's statement as well-founded, and for regarding the sons of Lucius Calpurnius Piso as the youths concerned, more especially as the elder of those sons would probably be entering on early manhood at the close of Horace's career. And with the identity of the Pisos established with some degree of probability, the *Ars Poetica* falls naturally into Horace's closing years, so that its publication may be dated 10-8 B.C. As for the main arguments for the earlier date, they have already been considered; though there remains the significant fact of Horace's strange silence where Virgil is concerned. Yet this is by no means inconsistent with the later date. It is not inconceivable that Horace may have composed the poem before the death of Virgil, and then have held up publication till, roughly, the ninth year (*nonum in annum*). He may alternatively have begun the poem at the earlier date and have completed its composition in the years that followed—a not unlikely proceeding in view of the concentrated nature of the work. But in any event the date of its actual publication would seem to be tolerably clear. It was probably produced during Horace's closing years, and was addressed to the sons of Lucius Calpurnius Piso; and to this conclusion, on the whole, the evidence would seem to point.

The question of date is, however, not the only problem to be considered at this stage. Further controversies have from time to time arisen in connexion with the form and character of the *Ars Poetica*; and in this field fierce battles have also been fought, though with results of perhaps a more reassuring kind. One thing is clear, that the poem was intended as an *Epistle* in the Horatian sense, that is, a letter in verse addressed to actual correspondents, written in a lively and discursive fashion, and with primarily the needs of the correspondents in mind.

Quintilian¹ it was who first referred to it as the *Ars Poetica*; and, after him, the description was generally adopted, carrying with it the suggestion of a set treatise or *techné* on the subject of poetry, a sense in which it was accepted right down to modern times. From the first, however, many were perplexed by its apparent inconsequence and lack of system; and Scaliger for one is found describing it as "an *Art* written without art", while Heinsius sought to restore order and logic by transposing certain passages, an enterprise in which he was followed by later scholars. Others, again, despairing of reconciling the description with the fact, refused to recognise the poem as a regular treatise or *Art*, and maintained it to be an epistle written with epistolary negligence and with a satirical or polemical object in view. As to the particular object, however, no agreement was reached, the poem being variously described as a satire against the Roman theatre or against contemporary poets; and one further suggestion was that the letter was intended to dissuade the young Pisos from writing poetry, or at any rate from embarking on the drama—beyond which, it will be allowed, suggestion could scarcely go.

A new light was ultimately thrown on the genesis of the poem when Norden,² followed by others, pointed out that, in spite of its apparent formlessness, the poem was really based on a scheme of treatment which had appeared in Hellenistic treatises on poetry and rhetoric, and by Horace's day had become a more or less recognised convention. Thus in the *Ars Poetica* may be traced the normal three divisions characteristic of Hellenistic work, according to which the subject was broadly treated under the heads of *poesis*, *poema*, and *poeta*.³ Of these three divisions the second, dealing with *poema*, was the most thoroughly handled; in it moreover the drama came in for the most serious treatment, the lyric being neglected, and the epic considered only in so far as it bore on the drama; and here again may be recognised some of the earlier Hellenistic features.

¹ *Inst. Orat.* viii, 3, 60.

² See E. Norden, "Die Composition und Litteraturgattung der Hor. Epistula ad Pisones" (*Hermes*, xl, 1905, pp. 481–525), and K. Barwick, "Die Gliederung der rhetorischen τέχνη und die Horazische Ep. ad Pisones" (*Hermes*, lvii, 1922, pp. 1–62).

³ See vol. i, 170 ff.

Apart from this, the main themes discussed by Horace were also the traditional ones, embodying the relative importance of genius and art, of subject-matter and form, and the question as to what constituted the essential function of poetry. So that it would seem that in adopting this rough framework Horace was proceeding on regular lines, following with some differences the familiar methods of the Hellenistic *techné* or *Art*; and that such methods were not unfamiliar to him is suggested by the traces of a rhetorical scheme which have been detected amidst the apparent formlessness of one of his *Satires*.¹

But this is not all; there are further elements in the *Ars Poetica* which render it probable that Horace was here following, not a general tradition, but some particular treatise or treatises representative of that tradition. And this is suggested by the presence of material which appears either incongruous or else at variance with what is known of Horace's practice. There is, for instance, something unquestionably strange in the discussion of such matters as stage-music and satyric plays,² both of which are treated at length, to the exclusion of other and more important matters. It is true that the degeneracy of stage-music may not have been without its interest for Horace's contemporaries; yet it is doubtful whether the matter was of sufficient weight to warrant an excursus on the subject in a body of teaching intended for young poets. Then, too, the discussion of satyric plays seems hard to explain; for it can scarcely have been Horace's intention to recommend a revival of such plays to his own age,³ though Pomponius, we learn from Porphyrio, had attempted that *genre*.⁴ Had it been Horace's aim, as has sometimes been asserted, to revive the glory of the ancient Greek drama, that object would scarcely have been served by a disquisition on satyric plays, which added little or nothing to the instruction previously given on dramatic composition.⁵ That satyric plays and stage-music were on the other hand

¹ See G. L. Hendrickson, "The Literary Form of Horace, *Serm.* I, 6" (*Amer. J. of Phil.* xxiii, 1902, pp. 388-99).

² *A.P.* 202-19; 220-50.

³ See Rostagni, *op. cit.* p. 64 for a valuable note on this subject.

⁴ See J. F. D'Alton, *Roman Literary Theory and Criticism*, p. 408.

See O. Immisch, *op. cit.* pp. 139-58 for views to the contrary.

frequent subjects of controversy in the early Hellenistic period is fairly certain;¹ and, as such, would probably figure in the *Poetics* of that age. In Horace's treatment, however, they appear as somewhat irrelevant, exhausted matter with but slight bearing on the purpose in hand, and therefore in all probability material taken over from some earlier treatise in which they had possessed interest of a real and living kind.² And the same suggestion arises when we note the discrepancy existing between Horace's theory and practice with regard to the use of metres in poetry. The doctrine he lays down concerning the inseparable connexion between metre and content (ll. 73 ff.) is obviously not observed in his *Odes* and *Epodes*;³ and the inference seems to be that here again the theory was taken over from some earlier work. So that altogether the conclusion seems inevitable, that Horace in composing his work was influenced by some Hellenistic treatise; that he took over the general plan with some modification, embodied much of its doctrine, and by avoiding all show of pedantry or even system, succeeded in transforming a formal treatise into an Epistle, though not without leaving traces of the source on which he drew.

And this being so, a new significance is attached to Porphyrio's statement which asserts definitely that Horace was indebted, not to a general tradition, but to the teaching of a specific writer whom indeed he names, that is, Neoptolemus of Parium (*concessit praecepta Neoptolemi τοῦ Παριανοῦ de arte poetica non quidem omnia sed eminentissima*).⁴ Corroboration of this statement, moreover, comes indirectly from Philodemus. From him we gather that the theories of Neoptolemus were under discussion in Horace's day; that they were also being discussed by one in close touch with that Piso family, to certain members of which Horace addressed his work; and further that the plan of Neoptolemus's treatise and to some extent its theorising were on lines subsequently found in the *Ars Poetica*. And in the light of these facts it can scarcely be

¹ See vol. I, 166.

² See K. Latte, "Reste frühhellenistischer Poetik im Pisonenbrief des H." (*Hermes*, LX, 1925, pp. 1 ff.).

³ See R. K. Hack, "The Doctrine of Literary Forms" (*Harv. St. in Class. Phil.* xxvii, 1916, pp. 27 ff.).

⁴ Meyer's ed. of Porphyrio (Teubner), p. 344, l. 15.

doubted that the source in question is the lost *Poetics* of Neoptolemus, with which Horace had been familiarised by the teaching of Philodemus.¹ Nor need the fact that Horace fails to follow Philodemus in his theorising dispose of the probability that his attention had been called in the first instance to Neoptolemus by the Epicurean philosopher. As we have already seen, Philodemus's comments were mainly of a negative kind; they were directed against the establishment of literary doctrine based on precept and rule; and they savoured, moreover, of an autonomy of art which conflicted with Horace's views as to the moral and civic function of poetry. These considerations are a sufficient explanation of Horace's acceptance of what Neoptolemus had to offer, while rejecting at the same time the teaching of Philodemus. His positive purpose and his utilitarian views on literature and life were without doubt the main factors in his choice of material; and if the part played by Philodemus as an intermediary cannot definitely be proved, it must at least remain a reasonable probability.²

Such then in all likelihood is the genesis of the *Ars Poetica*; and it remains to discuss its actual nature and value. Of the general plan of the work something has already been said. It consists of the threefold category characteristic of Hellenistic work, according to which the subject was broadly treated under the heads of (a) *poesis* or subject-matter (ll. 1-41), (b) *poema* or form (ll. 42-294), (c) *poeta* or the poet (ll. 295-476). Thus Horace opens his first section (*poesis*) with some significant introductory remarks on the need for observing organic unity and propriety (ll. 1-37); after which he touches briefly on the choice of subject-matter (ll. 38-41). Then the second and more extensive section (*poema*) begins, in which "form" in the abstract (ll. 42-127) and "form" in the concrete (ll. 128-294) are the main topics. After a brief note on the arrangement of material (ll. 42-5), he proceeds to deal at length with poetic style or expression, commenting in detailed fashion on the proper choice of poetic diction (ll. 46-72), on the "composi-

¹ See however O. Immisch, *op. cit.* pp. 21-32, for the theory that Horace was indebted to Arius Didymus, a representative of the teaching of Antiochus of Ascalon, and an influential teacher at Rome during the Augustan age.

² See A. Rostagni, *op. cit.* pp. cixff., for a discussion of this matter.

tion" or arrangement of words, especially in metrical form (ll. 73-85), and finally on the styles and "tones" appropriate to the different dramatic *genres* and characters (ll. 86-127). By an easy transition he next enters on a treatment of the drama which is to deal with "form" in more concrete fashion. He proceeds to illustrate from the epic the proper choice of dramatic material (ll. 128-35) and the artistic handling of the plot (ll. 136-52), while adding some instruction on dramatic characterisation (ll. 153-78). This is followed by a series of miscellaneous precepts bearing on the dramatic art in general (ll. 179-201); and the section is brought to a close by a discussion of stage-music (ll. 202-19), a somewhat lengthy account of the satyric drama (ll. 220-50), and a brief survey of Greek and Roman dramatists (ll. 251-94). Then comes the third and concluding section of the work (*poeta*), with "the poet" as its subject. Horace has been speaking of the careless writing of Roman poets (ll. 295-308), and the transition is thus an easy and a natural one. First, he pronounces on the duty (*munus*) of the poet in preparing himself for his task (ll. 309-32), and then on his aim or function (*officium*) (ll. 333-46). A lengthy disquisition on "the perfect poet" follows (ll. 347-452), in the course of which practical hints of a positive and a negative kind are given; and the work is brought to a close by a satirical portrait of a demented poet (ll. 453-end), thus emphasising the doctrine of "propriety" with which the poem opened.

In the light of this analysis, therefore, the presence of plan in the poem is unmistakable. Running through it is a thread of continuous purpose which renders it something more than a desultory piece of writing; and the suggestion otherwise made, that the framework is made up of a series of texts taken from a Greek treatise, then paraphrased and discussed, does not meet the case.¹ The truth is that what we have here is for all practical purposes an *ars* in the Roman sense of the term, that is, a body of principles and rules which intending poets would find useful in composing. And if the scheme of treatment is confessedly artificial, if also there are great gaps and important omissions, on the other hand it may be claimed that the ground

¹ See H. Nettleship, *Essays on Roman Literature*, pp. 174 ff.

covered is nevertheless wide, and that the treatment embraces not a few of those elementary and basic principles that lie at the root of all art. At the same time it must be remembered that if the result is an *Art* the primary purpose was an *Epistle*; and it is Horace's attempt at disguising his didactic effort that has added to the confusion and difficulties of the work. Furthermore, the epistolary intention goes to explain other features of the poem, its discursiveness, its repetitions, its abrupt transitions, all of which are devices used elsewhere for avoiding the appearance of too formal a regularity. Characteristic, too, of the epistolary manner is its conversational tone, its easy opening and above all its lively close; for with Horace an unexpected jest or an arresting image was a frequent conclusion of both *Satire* and *Epistle*. But most of all to the epistolary form is due much of the charm of the work, which renders it unique in the history of literary criticism. In it we find a reflexion of Horace's personality and thought, his mature theory, his sanity, his grace; as well as a host of generalisations felicitously and forcibly expressed, and effectively placed at the opening or the end of his paragraphs.

It is as a contribution to literary theory, however, that the *Ars Poetica* is primarily distinguished; and to this aspect of the work attention from now on will be given. Of interest in the first place are his remarks on the nature of poetry, though this seemingly was a matter with which he was not greatly concerned. Thus he nowhere probes into such questions as had engaged the attention of Aristotle; the relation, for instance, in which poetry stands to the phenomena of life or to ultimate truth. Of the Aristotelian theory of "imitation" he has nothing definite to say. It had already become clear in Hellenistic times that Aristotle's idealistic conception had not covered the whole range of existing poetry; and Horace nowhere endorses the Aristotelian theory in so many words. It is true that in the comparisons he makes between poetry and an imitative art such as painting, an imitative process in poetry would seem to be implied; and elsewhere his conception of the drama is definitely that of "an imitation of life", as when, for instance, he advises poets to look to life and manners for their models.¹ But along

¹ *A.P.* 317-18.

with this, he has also in mind as his conception of poetic activity a process of "invention" (*πλάσσειν*), according to which the poet gave free play to his fancy, thus creating something new, a blend of fact and fiction. It was in short a creative process which aimed at producing fictions meant to please,¹ stories corresponding to little or nothing in real life. And here Horace was plainly influenced by Hellenistic doctrine, though he sets limits to the degree in which the fanciful and the absurd should be recognised in poetry. And for the rest, he accepts without questioning the doctrine of "poetic inspiration", though his conception of that factor is presumably of a somewhat vague kind. For he regards it as a mysterious force working from without on the poet; and it is a force to which he renders lip-service in his invocations to the Muses. But he is also careful to denounce the current abuses of the doctrine, as when he ridicules all pretenders who claim inspiration by reason of their eccentric behaviour,² or as a result of their devotion to the cup.³

Concerning the function of poetry he has rather more to say; for this was the aspect that appealed most to the practical Romans, and Horace enlarges upon it in more than one place. His main doctrine is given where he explains that the poet's function is either to improve (*prodesse*) or to give delight (*delectare*), or again, to combine both of these aims.⁴ All three functions, it is worth noting, were held to be legitimate; the utilitarian (*utile*) by reason of its uplifting effects, the hedonistic (*dulce*) by the pleasure it afforded, and the two-fold function by its combination of effects. Yet neither the utilitarian nor the hedonistic aim was sufficient for the highest poetry; the perfect poet, according to Horace, had to combine both functions; and here he is adopting the position of Neoptolemus and the Peripatetics generally. For the most part, however, it is upon the educational side of poetry and its usefulness to the state that stress is chiefly laid; and indeed it was one of Horace's main objects to arouse his contemporaries to a sense of the high seriousness of poetry. Hence his adaptation of the familiar commonplace relating to the civilising power of oratory, of

¹ *A.P.* 338ff.² *A.P.* 295ff.³ *Ep.* I, xix, 1ff.⁴ *A.P.* 333-4.

which both Isocrates and Cicero had previously made use; for by Horace the same claim is now made on behalf of poetry, and in terms closely parallel, if also more extensive. Thus from the earliest times poetry is said to have been the great civilising agency, founding cities and establishing laws; it subsequently inspired in men the heroic mood, taught them wisdom, lightened their hours of ease, and in this way won honour and fame as a thing divine.¹ Elsewhere he enlarges further on the subject,² drawing doubtless on a long line of earlier Greek theorists; though the views also represent his own conviction, that the services of poetry to the community are of a social, national, and religious kind. But while the uplifting function thus occupies the more prominent place, Horace does not forget to attach value to the aesthetic side of poetry; and he throws further light on the nature of the pleasure aimed at, when he requires poems to be not merely beautiful (*pulchra*) but also possessed of charm (*dulcia*).³ What apparently is meant is that a mere satisfying of the taste by formal excellences will not suffice; poetry, he insists, must also appeal to the emotions, must aim at bringing about *ψυχαιωγία* or "the winning of souls"; and the distinction, originally due to Alexandrian grammarians, is one that is expounded elsewhere by Dionysius of Halicarnassus.⁴ Such then is Horace's conception of the function of poetry; for the further claim, incidentally made, that it confers immortality on him whom the poet commemorates,⁵ is rather of the nature of a conceit. It was held to be the privilege of the Muses to grant such immortality through the poet who was their priest; and this idea, repeated by Ovid, fired the imagination at the Renaissance, and gave rise to the "eternising" theme of Ronsard and of Shakespeare in his *Sonnets*.

It is, however, not so much with these matters of speculative interest as with the actual practice of the poetic art that Horace is primarily concerned. From the first he had cherished an

¹ *A.P.* 391-407.

² Cf. *Sat.* i, iii, 99 ff.; also *Ep.* ii, i, 126-38, see pp. 64-5 *supra*.

³ *A.P.* 99-100.

⁴ *Arrangement of Words*, 10-11.

⁵ Cf. *Odes*, iii, 30; iv, 8, 28. Cf. also Plato, see vol. i, 63.

exalted conception of poetry. He had denied to mere verse the quality of poetry, and had doubted whether satire or comedy was worthy of the name.¹ For poetry, he held, the fire of inspiration was needed, besides imaginative power and a lofty utterance; and this view, which was confirmed as time went on, led him finally to discuss the principles of the art. Characteristic of his outlook, in the first place, is the stress he lays on the need for the poet to know his craft (*ars*), and so to write well knowingly. This indeed may be described as the root idea of all his theorising. Of the need for natural endowment or genius (*natura*) he is also well aware; though unlike Cicero and most of the earlier theorists, he does not make this his first consideration. Both factors, he declares, are alike necessary;² and he dismisses in a word the much-vexed question as to which of the requirements was the more essential. Nor is the position he takes up at all unintelligible; for one thing, in the matter of genius no instruction was possible, while throughout the Hellenistic period the idea had been gaining ground that poetic creation was less a matter of inspiration than of unimpassioned hard work. But over and above this were the urgent needs of the time. Fully alive to the untutored scribbling that went on,³ with its defective methods and standards, conscious too of Roman deficiencies on the artistic side,⁴ Horace devotes his efforts to an explanation of art and of the principles that would conduce to poetic activities of a more fruitful kind.

First among his guiding precepts is that which prescribes the imitation of Greek literary art. He enjoins his readers to give days and nights to the study of Greek models (*exemplaria Graeca*);⁵ by which are clearly meant the works of classical Greece. Against following the example of the older Latin poets he utters more than one warning, thus opposing the teaching of the grammarians; and the fact that what he had in mind were classical, not Alexandrian, models, is made plain by his references throughout. Thus he nowhere in this connexion alludes to the Alexandrian school; what he discusses are Homer and the writers of Greek tragedy, and he himself claims

¹ *Sat.* i, iv, 38-56.² *A.P.* 408 ff.³ *Ep.* ii, i, 117.⁴ *A.P.* 323 ff.⁵ *A.P.* 268-9.

to have imitated Archilochus, Alcaeus, and others. And besides being the first in connexion with poetry to lay down the law of imitating the ancients, he has also something to say on the process itself. More than once, for instance, he attacks the herd of rude imitators who had an eye for nothing but the faults of their models; and what he advocates is rather an imitation of the best qualities of the ancients, a generous use of their technique and an assimilation of the loftiness and originality of their themes. Greek measures were in short to be adapted to the Roman lyre; into the earlier moulds were to be poured ideas that were national and original.¹ So that with Horace the true "imitation" was one of re-creation, not repetition;² and it was an appeal to antiquity that was intended to lead finally to originality in expression.

Of the general principles which Horace proceeds to inculcate, none is however of greater import than the law requiring in a poem organic unity; and it is with a statement of that law that the *Ars Poetica* opens. The age was one in which the teaching of Plato and Aristotle in this matter was apt to be forgotten, the immediate causes being the example of some of the older Latin writers, but more especially the narrative methods then in vogue among the contemporary neoteric poets. In the efforts of the latter to re-tell the old Greek stories with new emotional and descriptive effects it not infrequently happened that the logic of form was sacrificed. The narratives became episodic and often involved, interruptions were caused by indulgence in passages of fine writing, with the result that the harmony of the structure was disturbed and the sense of unity impaired. Hence the emphatic re-statement of the law on the part of Horace. In every poem, he asserts,³ there must exist harmonious relations between the parts themselves and the whole; a unity of parts, vitally connected and structurally related, such as was to be found in Nature's organisms. Otherwise the resulting poem would be meaningless and absurd; as absurd, adds Horace, as a distorted picture, or those monstrous visions that come to sick men in their dreams (*aegri somnia*).⁴ And with

¹ *A.P.* 287; cf. also *Ep.* I, xix, 21 ff.

² *A.P.* 133-4.

³ *A.P.* 1-37.

⁴ *A.P.* 7.

this effect of unity nothing should be allowed to interfere, neither the licence that is accorded to poets, nor yet the fondness for the "purple patch" (*purpureus pannus*),¹ glowing but irrelevant. For success in details, he adds, is no sort of substitute for artistic unity. In sculpture a mere craftsman may be expert in details yet lack the power of creating a complete form. And similarly to the poet the architectonic faculty is indispensable; the law of unity in poetry is of a fundamental kind.

Then, again, with regard to poetry in general, Horace emphasises the need for sound and appropriate subject-matter. And this principle he lays down in its widest and most comprehensive form when he states that "the source and fountain-head of good writing is right thinking" (*scribendi recte sapere est et principium et fons*).² By "right thinking" he means wisdom in its general sense, as well as that insight into universal truth which comes from a philosophic training. And while in this particular place, it is true, he has in mind primarily dramatic poetry, that the statement holds true of poetry generally is also made clear when he stresses elsewhere the importance of choosing a congenial poetic theme.³ For with this achieved, he maintains, a sound grasp of the subject becomes possible; and fitting expression, he adds, will naturally follow.⁴ Thoughts will then assume their clearest and most effective form, and all that is irrelevant to the purpose in hand will be rejected.

At the same time, however, he is aware that more is involved in artistic utterance than this; and he has something to say on the matter of poetic style, thus calling attention to the proper choice of words and to their arrangement in composition and metrical form. In connexion with poetic diction, in the first place, his main contention is that a wise discretion must in general be exercised. Elsewhere he had declared that showy words should be pruned, rough words polished, and words lacking in dignity or force were to be ruthlessly rejected.⁵ And here he was condemning all hackneyed and colourless words, not the simple direct words of everyday speech; though centuries later the passage gave support to the neo-classical demand for an

¹ *A.P.* 15-16.

² *A.P.* 309.

³ *A.P.* 38ff.

⁴ *A.P.* 40, 311.

⁵ *Ep.* II, ii, 110ff.; see p. 63 *supra*.

artificial diction, as was seen in the affected periphrastic speech of eighteenth-century verse. Further remarks on the subject were the outcome of contemporary quarrels, in which the "neoterics" claimed free licence in matters of diction, while the Atticists stood for a strict and pure Latinity; and Horace identifies himself with the views of neither. He declares, for instance, against the liberties taken by the "new poets", and more especially against their excessive borrowings from the Greek. It was an affectation which had led to writing of a "macaronic" kind; and at an early date Horace had expressed his dislike for this incongruous mixture, while recognising that a happy blend was capable of charm, as was a skilful mixing of Falernian wine with Chian.¹ On the other hand he is alive to the pressing need for a richer poetic vocabulary; and he asserts the poet's right to adopt new words in current use, or to create others out of Latin roots on the analogy of the Greek (*Graeco fonte*),² in order to express ideas for which no equivalent existed in Latin. Then, too, he encourages the revival of picturesque archaic words formerly used by the kilted Cethegi,³ and in these injunctions he was guided in part by his own poetic instinct, partly also by national sentiment. But he further defends his position by an appeal to precedent, when he claims for Virgil and Varius the same liberties as had been accorded to Caecilius and Plautus;⁴ and he also falls back on the philosophy of language, explaining in accordance with the doctrine of the Anomalists that language is ever in a state of flux, that words flourish, decay, and then spring to life again, if contemporary usage (*usus*) so wills it.⁵ And this contemporary usage or custom he regards as the ultimate criterion of a true poetic diction; in it are said to be vested judgment, authority, and rule (*arbitrium et ius et norma*) of an absolute kind.⁶ So that for Horace the language of poetry was subject to no stereotyped rules, no conventional limits; these were shackles imposed by a later race of theorists.

Apart from the nature of the poet's language, however, Horace recognises that effective expression in poetry depends

¹ *Sat.* I, x, 20-30.

² *A.P.* 52-3.

³ *A.P.* 50; cf. *Ep.* II, ii, 117.

⁴ *A.P.* 54.

⁵ *A.P.* 70-1.

⁶ *A.P.* 72.

also upon the handling of the words themselves, and to this matter of "composition" he alludes in brief but significant fashion. Among his more suggestive utterances is that which urges care and taste in the arrangement of words, so that by a skilful setting (*callida iunctura*) familiar words might be made new, and commonplace words invested with an air of strangeness.¹ He even repeats the injunction later in recommending a poetic style based on an artfully arranged diction, adding that in style "it is order and connexion that are all-important" (*series iuncturaque pollet*).² And here, if anywhere, lay one of the profoundest secrets of his own craft, the secret of that verbal felicity which by breaking up *clichés* endowed common words with fresh graces and powers. It was a theme that was treated more fully by Dionysius of Halicarnassus; but the principle is here laid down in characteristic fashion by Horace. And for the rest, he has a word or two to say on style in general, as when he points out for instance the value of clearness (*lucidus ordo*) in expression,³ or when he commends a brief and terse manner, especially in satirical or didactic work.⁴ Such a style, he explains, would be free from tedious verbiage; it would enable one to grasp and retain what is said concisely; and from that result every unnecessary word would in some measure detract.

Then, again, there is his teaching as to the metrical arrangement of words, and the verse-forms bound up with the different "kinds" of poetry. As the basis of his theory he takes (either directly or indirectly) the practice of the classical Greeks as represented by Didymus of Alexandria (65 B.C.—A.D. 10), who in his work *Concerning Poets* had dealt at length with the poetic "kinds" and their appropriate metres. By the ancient Greeks, it was assumed, the different types of poetry had been marked out, and verse-forms assigned in keeping with the subject-matter; and since the arrangement was held to rest on a natural propriety, on an inseparable connexion between metre and content, it was one that was said to be fixed for all time. To the various themes and "kinds" Horace therefore assigns their respective metres; to stories of great and warlike exploits, the

¹ *A.P.* 46-8. ² *A.P.* 242. ³ *A.P.* 41. ⁴ *Sat.* i, x, 9 ff.; *A.P.* 335-7.

hexameter; to poems of complaint and inscriptions, elegiac verse; to poems of invective, tragedy and comedy, iambic verse; and to hymns to the gods, odes to Victory, convivial and love poems, measures of a lyrical kind.¹ And the observance of these laws, he maintains, was binding on all poets; each *genre* was to have its appropriate measure. But the doctrine thus laid down is by no means convincing. For one thing, the classification of the *genres* here adopted is superficial in character. It was the old classification which, based on the formal view that the metre determined the type of poem, had been condemned by Aristotle as logically and aesthetically unsound. Then, too, the relations existing between metre and content in ancient poetry were not necessarily fixed and final; and this in practice is revealed by Horace himself, who elsewhere is found not infrequently mixing the *genres*. Some of his *Epodes*, for instance, are not governed by the iambic law; and not a few of his *Odes* fail to comply in subject-matter with the laws of the lyrical *genre*.² So that his dogmatic prescriptions with regard to metre are far from infallible; he is merely repeating traditional doctrine then current.

These then are among the main doctrines laid down by Horace with regard to poetry in general. And for the rest, he concerns himself solely with but one of the poetic "kinds", namely, the drama; though in dealing with tragedy he treats it in such a way as to make his teaching apply to poetry as a whole. In one place previously he had dealt with satire,³ pointing out the need for a plain style, brevity in expression, and variety of effect. In connexion with the drama, however, he is more explicit; and his teaching here, which ranges over plot, characterisation, and style, is in many of its details reminiscent of Aristotle. In the first place he advises as to the subject-matter of the plot; and what he recommends is a re-handling of the old Greek legends, the alternative being the invention of themes entirely new.⁴ From this latter course,

¹ *A.P.* 73 ff.

² See R. K. Hack, "The Doctrine of Literary Forms" (*Harv. St. in Class. Phil.* xxviii, pp. 27 ff.).

³ *Sat.* i, x, 9-15; see pp. 59-60 *supra*.

⁴ *A.P.* 119.

however, he would dissuade intending dramatists. "It is hard", he explains, "to create particulars out of universals" (*proprie communia dicere*),¹ in other words, to create individual and living men out of abstract qualities common to all mankind. And his advice is therefore to draw on tradition for the necessary dramatic material, rather than to attempt an original story. Nor was such a proceeding inconsistent with the highest artistic standards, or with the originality that counts, namely, originality of treatment. For just as common words could be given an air of strangeness by means of art, so old familiar stories could be made new by skilful handling. And with this object in view it was necessary to treat such stories freely, without taking over slavishly all their details;² moreover, in the re-shaping process, care was to be exercised in developing the stories on sound lines, and in a fashion that was free from inconsistencies and absurdities.³ In any event, added Horace, it was possible for the dramatist to make such material his own, provided that he avoided a hackneyed treatment, and drew upon the fountain-heads, Homer and the rest. And here in his warning against the commonplace and obvious tracks (*vilem patulumque orbem*) of the Cyclic poets,⁴ Horace seems to be echoing the familiar saying of Callimachus.

Of equal importance, however, are his instructions for the handling of the dramatic plot; and for this purpose he takes the Greek epic as his model, presumably on the ground of its familiarity to his Roman readers. He first shows how Homer opens in simple and quiet fashion; how also he begins his Trojan story not with an account of its ultimate origin (*gemino ab ovo*),⁵ but with a plunge straightway into the heart of his narrative (*in medias res*); and how, too, he proceeds subsequently, making use only of relevant details, while contriving for his narrative a coherence of structure in which "the beginning, the middle and the end" were all in agreement (*primo ne medium, medio ne discrepet inum*).⁶ And these methods Horace prescribes for the construction of the tragic plot. The quiet opening, the dis-

¹ A.P. 128.² A.P. 133.³ A.P. 134-5.⁴ A.P. 132.⁵ A.P. 147 ff.; i.e. from the twin egg of Leda or the birth of Helen.⁶ A.P. 152.

pensing with all tedious preamble, the direct approach to the main issue, the avoidance of unnecessary episodes, and finally the rigorous and logical connexion of incidents; all these he puts forward as leading principles and as basic requirements in a dramatic plot. Less fundamental in their nature, though of considerable importance in later critical history, are his further remarks on plot-construction, as when for instance he calls attention to the limitations of dramatic representation and the part played by narrative in dramatic work. Thus he distinguishes between incidents that could be suitably staged, and others that were best enacted behind the scene and so narrated to the audience.¹ Among the latter he includes actions of a revolting nature as well as others of a preternatural or abnormal kind; so that, according to his teaching, such episodes as that of Medea slaughtering her children or of Procne being turned into a bird were to be reported, not visibly represented. And he gives reasons for this restriction, in which, it might be noted, he was largely following Aristotle. Thus he explains that since men are less strongly impressed by what they hear than by what they see, hence deeds of violence become less shocking, and abnormal incidents less incredible, by being related instead of acted; and that consequently in such cases the narrative treatment is preferable and indeed essential. Then, too, like Aristotle, he forbids too free a use of the device by which a complicated plot would be solved by the interference of a god (*deus ex machina*).² As a rule, he maintains, the *dénouement* should be the natural outcome of the incidents which had preceded, any other procedure being inartistic; and therefore the device was permissible only when the occasion seemed to warrant it, as for instance in Euripides's *Hippolytus* where Artemis suitably intervenes. Or again, there are his further requirements, based for the most part on the practice of the classical Greeks, to the effect that the dialogue should be limited to three characters in any one scene,³ and that the Chorus should form an integral part of the play.⁴ With Euripides the Chorus had tended to become excluded from the action and to take part mainly in interludes between the acts. This practice, however, is condemned by

¹ A.P. 179ff.² A.P. 191.³ A.P. 192.⁴ A.P. 193-5.

Horace in the interests of artistic unity; and his conception of the Chorus is that of Aeschylus and Sophocles, an agent which entered into the dramatic structure. And lastly, there is his demand that a play should consist of five acts,¹ neither more nor less, a rule that became generally recognised at the Renaissance, though resting on neither the authority of Aristotle nor the practice of the classical Greeks. What Aristotle had to say on the dimensions of a play was something quite different; and if we may judge from the Greek tragedies that have come down no such limitations were observed at that earlier date, the number of the divisions or *ἐπεισόδια* varying from four to eight; so that the origin of the rule is far from clear. What seems most likely is that after Aristotle's day there was a tendency for such divisions to become fixed at five (including three *ἐπεισόδια*, together with the Prologos and Exodos); and that the Alexandrian critics made of this general usage a new dramatic rule. That the arrangement was characteristic of Plautus and Terence is by no means certain; for although the five-act division of their plays as we know them may have been based on the New Greek Comedy, more probably it was due to ancient editors applying Horace's rule to the various texts.² On the other hand it was Varro apparently who first made the doctrine familiar to Roman readers, and in this matter he was followed by Horace. So that altogether, it would seem, there are grounds for thinking that the five-act convention had established itself in the post-classical period; that it was a recognised rule by the time of Neoptolemus; and that Horace adopted it either on the authority of Neoptolemus or of Varro, or as a statement of a late Greek practice with which he was familiar.

Such then is Horace's theorising on the dramatic plot; and his remarks on characterisation are hardly less significant, in view of their relation to Aristotle's teaching and their influence on the work of later dramatists. In the first place Horace demands, as did Aristotle before him, that characters drawn from tradition should preserve their traditional features.³ Thus

¹ *A.P.* 189.² See Ussing's ed. of Plautus, vol. 1, p. 167.³ *A.P.* 119-24.

Achilles was to be represented as impatient and passionate, Medea as fierce and implacable, Orestes as grief-stricken; since any other conception of those characters would prove unconvincing and unreal, as compared with their effect in their traditional rôles. At the same time it was possible that fresh characters might be created; and Horace requires that such creations should be conceived on intelligible and artistic lines. They were in short to be self-consistent and free from contradictory traits;¹ and here once again, Horace is following Aristotle. Of interest, too, are his remarks on the nature of the Chorus, which, according to his theory already stated, was to represent a group of dramatic characters intimately bound up with the action of the play. He now further adds that it was to stand for a moralising or philosophising agent, such as had been characteristic of earlier Greek tragedy. It was therefore to support the virtuous with friendly counsel, to give check to the angry and comfort to the timorous; and while singing the praises of moderation and justice, law and peace, it was also to intercede with the gods for more equitable awards of Fortune in human affairs.² Most significant of all, however, is the stress laid by Horace on the Aristotelian demand for verisimilitude in character-drawing, and in particular, for qualities to be assigned to the various characters which should be in keeping with their respective ages. For this purpose it was necessary to know the normal traits appropriate to each stage of life; and Horace sketches lightly the four ages of man.³ First comes the child, fond of play and changeable of mood; then the youth, sport-loving and impressionable, improvident, high-spirited, and also unstable; then the man of riper years seeking wealth and friendships, ambitious in all things yet slow in his undertakings; and lastly the old man, with his miserly tendencies and dilatory ways, conspicuously lacking in courage and hope, ever peevishly praising the days of his youth (*laudator temporis acti*), and yet a hostile and grudging critic of the younger generation. These then were the features to be associated with each successive stage of life; and the device, which was intended merely as an aid to realism in character-drawing, was sound in

¹ A.P. 127.² A.P. 193ff.³ A.P. 158ff.

principle. Interpreted mechanically at a later date, however, it gave rise to the notion of fixed "types" of dramatic characters, and to that observance of a false *decorum* which had the effect of reducing dramatic personages to mere conventional lay figures.¹

Furthermore, on dramatic style Horace has also something to say; and in the first place he discriminates between the styles appropriate to tragedy and comedy. Both, according to his earlier statement, were to employ iambic verse; and this, not only because of its suitability for dialogue and for expressing action, but also because it was well adapted for use in the theatre, the quick recurrence of its strongly marked beat enabling it to be heard in noisy assemblies.² But while this was the law that governed the drama in general, in the use of that metrical form there were certain differences of tone (*colores*) to be observed as distinguishing tragedy from comedy. Thus comic themes were not to be treated in the lofty vein of tragedy, nor tragic themes in the commonplace manner appropriate to the lowlier themes of comedy.³ Each subject was in short to keep to its natural tone (*singula quaeque locum teneant sortita decentem*);⁴ there was to be no mixing of styles. Yet Horace is careful to add that the law was not invariable; he points out for instance that passionate strains might sometimes enter into comedy, while tragedy on occasion might make its appeal, not by swelling tones or high-sounding words, but by means of the simple language of prose (*sermo pedestris*).⁵ Then, too, he states that dramatic style must vary in accordance with character and circumstance; and that different tones must be associated with different personalities and moods. Thus each speech was to be in character, whether it was that of an old man or a young man, a lady of rank or a fussy nurse, a god, a merchant, a rustic, a fierce barbarian or an effeminate Assyrian, a cruel Theban or a proud Argive.⁶ In other words, distinctions of sex, age, race, and social standing, all were to be reflected in the quality of the style. And the mood of the speaker was also to affect the manner, whether the mood was one of anger or sorrow or mirth

¹ See vol. I, 94.

⁴ *A.P.* 92.

² *A.P.* 81-2.

⁵ *A.P.* 95.

³ *A.P.* 89ff.

⁶ *A.P.* 115ff.

or gravity.¹ This again was in keeping with the demands of verisimilitude; for a style that was not in accord with such conditions was not likely to have any convincing artistic results.

So far, then, we have been discussing Horace's theory of poetry in general, and of the drama in particular; and it now remains to complete that account by considering the further principles and precepts he lays down in connexion with the poetic art, many of which were to have lasting influence in later critical history. Of his remarks on the satyric drama but little need here be said. They are presumably of historical interest only;² and Horace describes it as a sort of serious drama, with a comic element supplied by the presence of satyrs, which had followed a performance of a tragic trilogy at Athens.³ Of greater importance however is the further teaching he supplies, made up for the most part of practical hints for the intending poet, though including also one far-reaching doctrine which is implied in almost all his theorising. This is of course the law of literary propriety or *decorum* in its widest sense, an application to poetry of the philosophical theory of τὸ πρέπον or appropriateness; and as with Cicero in his rhetorical theorising, it constitutes for Horace a guiding and dominating principle which runs like an undertone throughout the *Ars Poetica*. Thus propriety or fitness was to be observed in a work as a whole and in its several parts; it applied to the form, the expression, and the characterisation; it determined the choice of subject, the metre, the particular style and tone; while it also forbade the mixing of incongruous elements, the mingling of *genres*, the creation of characters that lacked verisimilitude, the improper use of the *deus ex machina*, and the like. Equally characteristic are, however, the further precepts he gives as to the practice of poetry; and none is more significant than his insistence on the need for polished workmanship, which was to be the outcome of artistic toil (*limae labor*)⁴ and scrupulous self-criticism. From the first this had been his ideal of poetic excellence; and again and again he inculcates the value of "the art to blot" (*litura*), and of the relentless pruning needed for that artistic finish

¹ *A.P.* 105 ff.

² See however p. 71 *supra*, note.

³ *A.P.* 220-56.

⁴ *A.P.* 291.

which, while satisfying the most exacting of tests (*ad unguem*),¹ would at the same time give an air of ease in writing. This in short was Horace's most insistent lesson; for the poet who relied on mere inspiration he has nothing but scorn. Moreover, he urges in his practical fashion that such artistic excellence would be ensured by submission of the poet's work to some discerning critic for correction; or again, by delaying publication for a time (*nonnumque in annum*)²—and here he has possibly Cinna's nine years in mind—so as to enable the poet to criticise his own work from a detached and impersonal standpoint. In any case, criticism and correction he regarded as essential to the process of creation; and artistic distinction or "correctness" as the one quality indispensable to all poetry. That there were forms of activity in which mediocrity of performance had its value he does not deny; and he mentions oratory as an example, seeing that the moderate orator has obviously his uses. But poetry, he declares, is not one of these. "If a poem has not excellence", he states, "it is definitely bad" (*si paulum summo decessit vergit ad imum*);³ since mediocrity in art is always intolerable. And here Horace enunciates a valuable aesthetic truth, though possibly he has also in mind the correction of some earlier teaching, such as that of Ariston of Chios, according to whose theory poems were capable of being divided into three categories, the good, the bad, and the indifferent. In this way, then, did Horace set up his standard of "correctness" in poetry; though at the same time he is conscious that an absolute standard is hard to attain; and he has no share in the meticulous demands of later ages which attached greater importance to the absence of faults than to positive merits. Defects in a poem, he maintains, may be readily condoned, provided they are redeemed by corresponding excellences (*ubi plura nitent*),⁴ and are neither fundamental nor persistent. Even Homer "nods", he explains; and a long poem must of necessity have its less inspiring parts, its flats;⁵ so that "correctness" must be understood in a relative, not an absolute, sense. To avoid misunderstanding, however,

¹ *A.P.* 294; also *Sat.* i, x, 72; *Ep.* ii, i, 169 ff.; *Ep.* ii, ii, 109–25.

² *A.P.* 387–8.

³ *A.P.* 378 ff.

⁴ *A.P.* 350.

⁵ *A.P.* 359–60.

in the concession thus made, Horace is careful to emphasise once again his main injunction and the necessity for attaining this relative excellence. And by way of illustrating anew his point he makes his famous reference to the sister art, Painting, a reference that has often been seriously misunderstood. "Poetry", he states, "resembles Painting" (*ut pictura poesis*);¹ thereby implying, not as was subsequently affirmed, that the analogy was complete—a conception corrected by Lessing in his *Laokoon*—but that the plastic and the literary arts had this much in common, that varying standards of excellence were to be found in both, and that, in both, excellence of workmanship was essential. Thus there are pictures, he points out, that please at a distance and on a hasty inspection, but fail to satisfy on a closer examination; others again are able to stand the severest of tests, and these are they that give delight always and everywhere (*repetita placebit*).² And so, Horace implied, it was with poetry. Superficial qualities might produce occasional results; but it was sound workmanship alone that led to real literary merit and made poetry a source of permanent delight. And here, incidentally, it is worth noting, Horace was anticipating "Longinus" in adopting as his test of literary value the *quod semper, quod ubique* principle of that later critic.

These, then, are among the more important of Horace's formal precepts, though elsewhere he supplies others, mainly of an ethical kind, which bear closely on the task of the poet. Thus he urges for one thing that good sense and judgment must be the guides of the poet throughout; for they will allow him to write only in accordance with his genius (*nihil invita Minerva*);³ they will also save him from excess, from falling into one error in avoiding another, since ill-judged brevity may easily become obscurity, excessive polish weakness, and grandeur mere bombast.⁴ Equally important is, however, his demand for sincerity of utterance and for real feeling on the part of the poet. For it is only thus that he can stir emotion in others; "if he would touch men's hearts he must first feel grief himself" (*si vis me flere dolendum est*).⁵ Then, too, Horace demands that the poet

¹ A.P. 361.² A.P. 365.³ A.P. 385.⁴ A.P. 25ff.; also *Sat.* 1, ii, 24.⁵ A.P. 102.

should keep himself free from corrupting tendencies, from that inordinate love of wealth, for instance, that tarnishes the soul;¹ or again, from that weakness for flattery that enfeebles a poet and makes honest criticism impossible.² And lastly, as in the case of Cicero's orator, the poet must bring to his task the widest culture, and above all a sound knowledge of life and human nature. This he will obtain, adds Horace, from the philosophy of Plato and his school (*Socraticae chartae*),³ while a further understanding might be gained from the world of men; and thus equipped, he will be able to copy from life itself, and to make lasting contributions to the art of poetry.

It is in this body of teaching, then, that Horace's contribution to criticism mainly consists; and in the doctrines and principles thus laid down in connexion with the poetic art is to be found the secret of his later influence on the theory and practice of literature. Compared with this his work as a judicial critic is slight, though by no means negligible; for it is in a sense complementary to his teaching, a natural consequence of his attempt to establish new standards and methods of writing poetry. Significant in the first place is his attack on the prevailing systems of judging poetry. Criticism of sorts was, for instance, the business of those assemblies which met together for the purpose of hearing semi-public recitations; and there the acclamation of those present was accepted as proof of literary merit. Apart from this, literary judgment was mainly in the hands of the *grammatici*, who as the professional teachers were the recognised critics; and they it was who in general assigned values to literary work, and indicated to the public what things they ought to admire. To such methods as these, however, Horace was definitely opposed; and his censure is in some measure the outcome of his own unpleasant experiences. Thus he condemns the judicial findings of the assemblies as being corrupt, the verdicts of packed and bribed juries;⁴ and the system in itself he regards as harmful, on account of the encouragement given to the "purple patch", and to tricks of speech that impressed an audience. And that the danger was a real one is unmistakably shown by tendencies in that direction

¹ *A.P.* 330ff. ² *A.P.* 419ff. ³ *A.P.* 310ff. ⁴ *Ep.* i, xix, 35ff.

visible in the later literature of Rome. Yet more severe is his attack on the critical work of the grammarians, with their arrogance, their petty jealousies, and above all their stultifying pedantry. He ridicules, for instance, their mechanical treatment in attempting to place poets in order of merit, and to assign to each some definitive epithet, a method no doubt influenced by the Alexandrian tradition, and with obvious advantages for teaching purposes. Thus he quotes some of their stock judgments (*ut critici dicunt*)¹ relating to Ennius, Pacuvius, Accius, and the rest; and their epithets he describes as superficial, as mere cant phrases which left untouched the vital characteristics of the poets in question. Nor was it merely their methods that Horace assailed; still more determined was his assault on the judicial standards of the grammarians, and on the models from which they drew their rules. According to their teaching, the true literary ideals were to be sought for in the earlier Roman poetry, and those ideals were to be attained only by a close copying of that work. This, in short, was the accepted doctrine which Horace set out to combat, and against which from the first he directed his whole energies. In the *Epistle to Augustus*, as we have seen,² he holds up to ridicule their whole position, and shows the absurdity of attaching merit to the older Roman poetry solely on account of its antiquity. The truth was, as Horace clearly demonstrated, that the standards of the grammarians were justified neither in theory nor in fact, and that their bias for things ancient was largely the result of loose and shallow thinking. At the same time he is also aware of other contributory causes; and he mentions for one thing the sentimental weakness of the older generation for poetry which they had admired in their youth,³ and, for another, the defects of the grammarians themselves, which after all he regards as the decisive factor. To their pedantic limitations and their jealousy of contemporaries he ascribes their admiration for the second-rate works of the past, their adoption of those works as standards and models, as well as their insistence on mere imitation, and their distrust of innovation in any shape or

¹ *Ep.* II, i, 50ff., see p. 64 *supra*.

² See p. 63 *supra*.

³ *Ep.* II, i, 81.

form.¹ Thus does Horace inveigh against the academic dogmatism in the criticism of his day, and against an inferior and a static conception of literature. The Greeks in their day, he points out, had been great innovators;² and he reiterates his demand for a return to the standards of the ancient Greeks in forming judgment, and for an imitation in practice which aimed finally at producing something new.

This attack by Horace on the prevailing standards and methods of judging literature was perhaps on the whole his most notable achievement as a judicial critic. In the work of actual judgment and interpretation he has distinctly less to show; his appreciations of poets, incidental and casual as they generally are, are far from illuminating, and consist mainly of brief comments already mentioned,³ those upon Lucilius, and on Bibaculus, Fundanius, Pollio, Varius, and Virgil among his contemporaries. Apart from this there is little in the way of helpful appreciation. It is clear that for Horace judicial criticism involved mainly a correction of verbal and stylistic errors in the interest of the poet, rather than an appraisal of literary values for the benefit of the reader. A good critic like Quintilius Varus, he explains,⁴ would censure harsh and lifeless lines; he would cut out false beauties and clear up obscurities; so that it is not surprising to find that a direct attempt at literary appreciation forms no part of Horace's critical task. At the same time he is responsible for certain judgments passed on the older Roman poets which are strangely biased and unfair. Ennius for instance he censures for careless writing, for ignorance of the poetic art, and more especially for a clumsy use of the iambic trimeter, a defect that he is said to share with Accius;⁵ whereas Plautus again is condemned for the looseness of his plots, his unconvincing characterisation, his slipshod style, and his plentiful lack of the cultured wit required by comedy.⁶ Of the positive merits of these particular writers but little is said; though in one place, it is true, he ascribes to Ennius real poetic quality, so that even "when dismembered there would

¹ *Ep.* II, i, 89-93.

³ See p. 60 *supra*.

⁵ *A.P.* 258ff.

² *Ep.* II, i, 90.

⁴ *A.P.* 438ff.

⁶ *A.P.* 270; *Ep.* II, i, 170.

still be found in him the limbs of a poet" (*disiecti membra poetae*).¹ Apart from this, however, no reference is made to those epic qualities of his which, characteristically Roman, won the respect of both Lucretius and Virgil; nor does Plautus receive credit for his amusing scenes, his spirited dialogue, or that *vis comica* which made many of his plays successful on the stage. The fact is that Horace's judgment in these matters would seem to have been blunted, partly by prejudice, partly also by limited sympathies; and in addition, he fails to take into account the historical factor in criticism. To the excessive praise given to the older Roman poetry he retorts in the first place with a censure that was equally undeserved, and was in reality prompted by his hostility to the grammarians. So that his judgment here is largely based on non-aesthetic grounds; the criticism he offers is not so much a considered judgment as a counterblast to the estimate put forward by the rival school of theorists. Apart from this, however, he was probably more or less insensitive to the peculiar excellences of the works in question, to their virile ruggedness for example, the energy and the force which had appealed to Cicero. What Horace looked for more especially was an observance of art, evidence of careful workmanship and artistic finish; and judged by these Augustan standards he found these works wanting. Then, too, he makes no allowance for the period in which the various works were written. It was a period of beginnings, indifferent alike to subtleties of form or to refinements of language; and these facts were of importance in any attempt at forming an adequate and a sympathetic judgment.

Judged then by his estimate of the value of the earlier native poetry, Horace's achievement as a judicial critic cannot be ranked very high. And his failure here to adopt the historical standpoint is all the more surprising, seeing that elsewhere he is not without a sense of the growth and development of literature, as well as of the conditions that influenced its production. Thus in one place he professes to trace the development of comedy at Rome;² beginning, so he claims, with rude Fescennine verses, which gave way in due course to performances

¹ *Sat.* i, iv, 60-2.

² *Ep.* ii, i, 145-60.

of crude invective, and then to genuine comedy under the influence of Greece. It is true that this sketch, which is paralleled in Livy's *History*,¹ may not represent real historical data; it may indeed be nothing more than a fictitious account of some earlier historian, based on an analogy with Aristotle's sketch of the three phases of Attic comedy.² But even so, its adoption by Horace is not without its significance; it shows him attempting at least to obtain a historical perspective in literary matters, an attempt that is repeated in his historical sketch of the masters of Greek drama.³ Then, too, he is conscious of the relations existing between literature and the society from which it sprang. He is aware, for instance, of certain aspects of Roman life and character which militated against a successful pursuit of art; the practical and didactic genius of Rome as contrasted with the speculative and artistic genius of Greece,⁴ or again, the degenerate taste of Roman audiences.⁵ To the latter point in particular he refers more than once, attributing to contemporary taste the licentious stage-music of his day,⁶ as well as the spectacles and shows which ruined all efforts of a genuine dramatic kind.⁷ So that it would seem that Horace was not without some perception of the historical continuity of literature or of its organic relations to life; considerations which in later times were to bring about a wise tolerance in literary judgment.

It now remains to attempt an estimate of Horace's criticism as a whole; and in the light of the foregoing analysis of his various theories it becomes possible to formulate a general idea of the nature of his contribution, his primary aims, his methods of work, the main substance of his teaching, and the place he occupies in the history of criticism. Of the underlying intention of his theorising there can be no doubt, especially when viewed in its historical setting. Conscious of the artistic crudities of the archaic native poetry, conscious, too, of the lack of high seriousness in the work of the neoterics, he sets out to champion the new school of poetry represented by Virgil, Varius and

¹ vii, 2.² *Poetics*, 1449 b, 1 ff.; see Hendrickson, *Amer. J. Phil.* xv, pp. 1 ff., xix, pp. 285 ff.³ *A.P.* 275 ff.⁴ *A.P.* 323 ff.; *Ep.* ii, i, 93 ff.⁵ *Ep.* ii, i, 185.⁶ *A.P.* 202-19.⁷ *Ep.* ii, i, 182 ff.

others, on the ground that in it were embodied those ideals and standards which made for great art. To this task he had been drawn by a recognition of the national needs; and he explains his position in the *Epistle to Augustus*. His object, in short, was to give new direction to contemporary effort by the inauguration of a national movement in literature which should be worthy of the high destiny of the Roman people, should indeed assist in the attainment of that end; and in view of the prevailing false standards, the pedantry, the prejudices, and the divided counsels of his day, he endeavours to put forward his conception of the high mission of poetry, and at the same time to give guidance in actual practice. This, then, and no other, was the motive that animated his critical work; it was an attempt to solve certain immediate problems arising out of the literary conditions of his time.

Equally interesting however are the methods he employs, which differ vitally from the inductive processes characteristic of Aristotle. So far from arriving at his theories by an observation and analysis of actual literature, Horace drew for the most part on aesthetic teaching then current, so that his doctrines are primarily of a derivative and traditional kind. Of the debt to Neoptolemus of Parium something has already been said; from him would seem to have been taken the main body of Horace's poetic theory. And since that earlier poetic theory coincided at many points with Hellenistic rhetorical theory, a like coincidence is seen also in Horace's work. In the teachings of Cicero and Horace, for example, are to be found a number of common precepts and ideas¹—the commonplaces relating to the civilising power of poetry (or oratory), to the need for sound thought, for a happy blend of genius and art, or the imitation of earlier models—and these striking similarities between the poetic and rhetorical theories then current are incidentally the outcome of Horace's methods of work. But while extensive borrowing from the past thus enters largely into Horace's processes, it is also true to say that the views he puts forward are derived ultimately from himself. For what he does

¹ See M. A. Grant and G. C. Fiske, "Cicero's *Orator* and Horace's *Ars Poetica*" (*Harv. St. in Class. Phil.* xxxv (1924)).

is to select from earlier authorities principles in accord with those convictions of his which were the outcome of his own experience and thought. Thus he adopts the teaching of Neoptolemus because in it he saw his own ideas reflected; whereas the doctrines of Philodemus, on the other hand, he practically ignores,¹ though presented with all the weight of a revered contemporary teacher. And if Horace may thus be said to have selected his authorities, equally certain is it that he also selected his material. What he took over from his sources was precisely that teaching which bore most intimately on the problems of his day; and in thus adopting and adapting traditional matter to his own ends he was but following his usual practice. In one place he claims to have subscribed to no one man's authority in matters of philosophy (*nullius addictus iurare in verba magistri*);² and this holds good of his literary doctrines. What he does is to express his own thought in the form and phrase of his predecessors; so that to his teaching may therefore be attached a personal and an original value. And original, too, are his methods of exposition, particularly in the *Ars Poetica*, to which reference has already been made. There, apart from all the literary graces which commend so effectively Horace's teaching, must also be noted the use of a fresh device which added a new medium to critical work. The formal letter of exhortation dated at least from the time of Isocrates; it had afterwards become a feature of Hellenistic cultural life; and in the *Epistolicae Quaestiones* of Horace's own day, it was devoted to instruction, severely impersonal and didactic, in matters historical, legal, grammatical, and the like. This, then, was the epistolary device adopted by Horace in his *Ars Poetica*; but in adopting it as his medium for critical purposes he infused into it all the charm of the genuine letter, with its familiar and personal elements, its liveliness and vivacity. And in so doing he inaugurated a new type of critical writing, one which was to give rise to a host of imitations in the versified essays of the Renaissance and after.

When we turn to consider what exactly he taught and the value of that teaching, we shall find it to represent something

¹ See p. 73 *supra*.

² *Ep.* 1, 1, 14.

less than a complete theory of poetry, or a body of systematic doctrine bearing on the poetic art. And this was due to limitations imposed upon him by several factors, by his immediate purpose, the nature of his sympathies, and also, and above all, the particular methods he employed. In the first place we have seen that his aim was primarily to correct and guide the literature of his day. It was no part of his purpose to pronounce on the ultimate problems of poetry, or to give instruction on the poetic art that should be exhaustive and final. There were, in his view, certain glaring defects in the prevailing poetic standards and methods—an ignorance of “art”, the use of debased models, careless workmanship, and an unworthy conception of the dignity of poetry—and it is such matters as these that almost exclusively engage his attention. Nor indeed in all probability could he have achieved a more ambitious programme; for though he had given much thought to matters of poetry, he had never really succeeded in exploring its depths. Lacking in speculative ability, he is not concerned with first principles as Aristotle before him had been. He does not always explain the reasons for the rules he lays down; and his interests throughout are plainly of a practical and ethical kind. Then, too, he is to some extent limited by the nature of his own poetic art, which, with all its exquisite charm, represented something less than the whole of poetry. Hence it is that to certain aspects of his subject he is seemingly blind; he lacks the broad sympathy and taste required for an exposition of poetry in its widest sense. What he sees, he sees clearly; but his range of vision is not wide, and in consequence he fails to perceive some of the essentials. Nor were these defects remedied by his methods of procedure, which involved, as we have seen, an adoption of approved traditional theories. Indeed, it is hardly too much to say that in this omission to base his theories on actual literature lay the root cause of his most serious limitations. As his standards, it is true, he accepts the practice of the great Greeks, with which he was doubtless familiar at first-hand. But their underlying principles he views mainly through a double refracting medium, that of Aristotelian theory together with the Hellenistic development of that theory. So that, for theoretical purposes, he deals

with Greek literature, as it were, at two removes; and it is no wonder that in the process something of the essential virtue is lost from his exposition of classical art. And if his methods thus led to an imperfect apprehension of classical ideals, equally unfortunate was his omission to take into account the later achievements of Alexandria and Rome, both of which would have broadened his conception of the poetic art. For in both there was evidence of fresh literary possibilities; new methods productive of new literary effects, innovations in form as well as in subject-matter, and a new inwardness and intensity that had much in common with modern "romantic" literature. These considerations of growth, however, do not enter into his theorising on poetry; and a chance was thus lost of establishing literary theory on a broad and permanent basis.

Despite all such limitations, however, Horace's positive achievement must be described as of the highest importance; and on this more especially it is essential to form clear ideas. First and foremost is the fact that he takes as his standards the literature of classical Greece, as indeed Aristotle had done. Then making explicit what had been implied in Aristotle, he advocates broadly an imitation of those ancient classics, thus applying to poetry a doctrine which by this time had become established in the rhetorical schools. In this way did Horace set up his creed of classicism in connexion with poetry; and in asserting once for all the supremacy of classical Greek art he may be said to have inaugurated a new phase in the history of criticism. Then, too, his conception of the manner in which those models were to be "imitated" was sound and suggestive. It stood for a process of re-creation, for the evolution of something new out of the old, for an adaptation in short of Greek measures to the Roman lyre; in any event, for something far removed from the slavish copying which later on became associated with that term. In developing these basic theories, however, Horace is perhaps less successful. For influenced in part by Hellenistic and rhetorical tendencies, partly also by the immediate needs of his time, his attention is almost wholly directed to matters of technique and form, whereas the spirit, the underlying principles, of the ancient literature for the most

part escape his treatment. From the first the aim of the Greeks had simply been to express themselves as perfectly as possible; and this had been done, not with the help of models or constricting rules, but by following the human instincts for sanity and comeliness, and by submission to the conditions bound up with their medium. So it was that the Greek poets acquired that perfect adaptation of means to ends, which accounts not only for the evolution of their various forms, but also for their distinguishing characteristics, their high seriousness, their largeness of utterance, their exquisite design and workmanship. To have imitated the ancients in the true sense therefore would have been to recapture and adopt their spirit and methods; but whereas imitation of this sort was being practised by Virgil at the time, it was but imperfectly represented in the teaching of Horace. On the other hand there is not a little virtue in what he has to say on matters of art, even though his classicism falls short of the genuine classical ideal. His pronouncements on questions of diction, on verse and structural form, on the methods of attaining unity, coherence, brevity and the like, all this must be described as of lasting value. Hellenistic influence, perhaps, is seen in the stress he lays on careful workmanship and polish, as well as in the neat and concise form in which he puts forward his teaching; while, again, from the same source he draws his doctrine of the poetic "kinds", a doctrine which, contrary to the classical ideal, propounded for poetry the notion of fixed and permanent forms. This, however, does not mean that Horace's teaching was nothing more than a barren formalism, concerned solely with the external and mechanical sides of poetry. In many respects, indeed, that teaching is of the highest value, giving a new sense of the high dignity and utility of poetry; and among the principles he lays down are not a few that treat of essentials, and embody truths that hold good for all time. Thus he is aware, for instance, of the emotional appeal of poetry; that the best test of its value is its power of affording permanent delight; and that the inspiration of well-chosen models, an acquaintance with the principles of art, together with sound sense, structural coherence and fitness (*decorum*) in its widest sense, are among the factors that produce

aesthetic results. What he has to say on poetic diction and on the new graces to be won by a skilful setting of familiar words is also of significance. For originality, he implies, is the art of making "old things new"; and as such it is the fruit of artistic treatment, not of mere novelty in either thought or diction. Nor are his remarks on the drama without their value; on both plot and characterisation he has something suggestive to say. And while urging in general a standard of artistic distinction or "correctness", he is far from advocating poetry that is "faultily faultless".

Such then in the main was the critical achievement of Horace, which was destined to influence posterity to an amazing extent. Its own immediate purpose it failed to achieve; for it did nothing to arrest the literary decadence at Rome, or to inspire a revival of the artistic glories of Greece. Already in the Middle Ages, however, its influence was felt; and at the Renaissance the *Ars Poetica* became one of the great text-books to which men turned for the teaching of antiquity on literature. From it were drawn arguments in defence of poetry, suggestions for the treatment of this or that literary language, as well as a body of rules for the creation of poetry; and in innumerable ways it shaped and coloured the new critical doctrines, more especially as its central teaching was in close keeping with the Humanistic formula of "following the ancients". As with Aristotle, however, his work, read apart from its historical setting, was by later theorists grossly misunderstood; so that his conception of classicism became more formal and rigid in the ages that followed. It was not merely that his principles were subsequently treated as rules, or that narrow and mechanical meanings were read into such theories as "the kinds", "imitation", *decorum*, and the like. The fact was that to later ages his teaching was none other than a rigid formalism, a body of conventions and rules which were binding on all poets; so that with him, indirectly, began the reign of authority and rule, as well as the constriction of literature in accordance with pre-established schemes of the past. Yet these things did not represent the essential elements of Horace's theorising, which must rather be sought for in the new direction he gave

to critical thought, in his grasp of fundamentals, and in his revelation of many of the secrets of his own poetic craft. In declaring for classicism he may have missed something of the real classical spirit; but he rendered no slight service in establishing as literary standards the great masterpieces of classical Greece. And for the rest, much of his teaching has lasting validity; it is the fruit of the experience of one who, himself a great artist, had a clear conception of poetic principles, and who handed them on in exquisite and memorable phrase.

CHAPTER III

CLASSICISM AND PROSE STYLE: DIONYSIUS OF HALICARNASSUS¹

WHILE the critical activities of the Augustan era, as we have seen, had mainly to do with poetry, at the same time there was not wanting discussion on matters relating to oratory and prose style; and in order to realise fully the critical development at this date, some estimate must be formed of the work done in this particular field. Already a new direction had been given to rhetorical teaching by Cicero. Basing his theories mainly on Aristotle and Isocrates, he had endeavoured to establish in oratory the traditions and methods of classical Greece; and while condemning alike the florid Asianism and the narrow Atticist tendencies then current, he had set before his generation a finer and a more complete conception of the nature of oratory. In the Augustan era that followed, this same task, with some difference, was carried on by Dionysius of Halicarnassus. Animated by the same general aim, he too made it his business to recommend as models the best Attic orators; and it was work for which in some ways he was better equipped than Cicero. As a Greek, for instance, he brought to his task the finer perception of one for whom Greek was the native language; so that he is more keenly alive to the excesses of Asianism, as well as to the lights and shades of Attic oratory. And if he fails to treat the subject in the large and persuasive fashion of Cicero, if too his methods and emphasis are somewhat different, his results nevertheless are of the highest significance. Amongst other things he calls attention to certain aspects of prose style which hitherto had been but cursorily handled; and in his judgments on Attic oratory we have what

¹ *Texts and Translations: Dionysii Halicarnassei Opuscula*, ed. Usener und Radermacher (Teubner), Leipzig, 1899-1929; *On Literary Composition*, ed. with trans. W. Rhys Roberts, London, 1910; *Three Literary Letters*, ed. with trans. W. Rhys Roberts, Cambridge, 1901; extracts (trans.) in Saintsbury, *Loci Critici*, pp. 33-8; J. D. Denniston, *Greek Lit. Crit.* pp. 145-64.

is perhaps the most considerable body of literary appreciations that has come down from antiquity.

Of the conditions which led to some amount of critical interest in the theory of oratory at this date something has already been said. It remains to add that the old controversy which had raged round Asianism and Atticism had not as yet been settled, in spite of Cicero's pronouncement. Both schools were represented in Augustan Rome; and there were forces that kept both tendencies alive, and were indeed to perpetuate them in ages to come, as was already being illustrated by the decline of oratory from the high level of Cicero which had become visible under Augustus. In the oratorical practice of Porcius Latro, Arellius Fuscus, Nicetes, Messalla, Pollio and others there persisted not a few of the features condemned by Cicero—Asiatic excesses on the one hand, Atticist preciousness on the other—so that the position was one that called for comment from enthusiasts for those classical ideals which in general characterised the age. Nor was this all; for the earlier controversy by this time had become complicated by certain factors which added to the difficulty of deciding the issue. Nothing, in the first place, is more remarkable than the new rôle assigned to declamation and declamatory exercises in the educational life of the time. From being mere speeches for practice they had come to be speeches for show, consisting of *suasoriae* and *controversiae* in which all sorts of topics were handled with a view to a display of ingenuity and wit. And the result was a new vogue for ornate and epigrammatic expression, fresh recognition being thus given to those exaggerations bound up with the Asiatic manner. At the same time there were difficulties among the Atticists themselves, difficulties arising out of the absence of clear ideas concerning the true nature of the classical ideal in oratory. All were agreed about the adoption of Attic models; but their choice was in practice dictated by personal predilections, so that Roman Atticists as a whole were divided into a number of sects. Some, like Calvus, were imitators of Lysias, others again followed Thucydides or Xenophon or Hyperides; and the movement was thus in danger of being stultified by divided counsels. To the solution of the problem the

rhetoricians of the age had nothing to bring. They were for the most part concerned with the subtleties of scholastic rhetoric, and were moreover themselves divided into two camps, the followers of Apollodorus and the followers of Theodorus. Hence the urgent need for a re-statement of the true position, and for some authoritative pronouncement on the guiding principles of oratory.

Apart from all this, however, questions concerning oratory would naturally be of interest to most educated Romans, in view of the rhetorical training which formed the normal course of education in the schools. And especially would this be so in those cultured Roman societies which were wont to meet for the discussion of literary matters. To one of these coteries Dionysius of Halicarnassus would seem to have belonged. And it is not unlikely that he was the inspiration and spokesman of his group; this at least is suggested by the nature of his critical writings, many of which are addressed to literary friends or patrons. He himself was a Greek, a native of Halicarnassus, who lived at Rome for some twenty years or more (30-8 B.C.) as a teacher of rhetoric; and whereas his circle included both Greeks and Romans, his works which are written in Greek give evidence of the bilingualism which then prevailed. Amongst the members of his circle were Quintus Aelius Tubero, possibly the eminent Roman jurist and historian, Melitius Rufus, another Roman patron, to whose son his most important work was dedicated, while Gnaeus Pompeius Geminus, Ammaeus, Demetrius, and Zeno would seem to have been Greeks, all of whom were interested in matters of oratory.

Most intimately associated with Dionysius in his critical work, however, and most active as a member of his society, was Caecilius of Calacte,¹ a Sicilian scholar, by religion a Jew, who taught rhetoric at Rome, and whose contributions to critical literature were of a considerable kind, illustrating by the way the main questions in the air at the time. Of those writings in Greek only a few fragments remain; but there is sufficient evidence to show the general nature of his work, and the close sympathy which existed between him and Dionysius. His main

¹ See W. Rhys Roberts, "Caecilius of Calacte" (*Amer. J. Phil.* xviii, 302-12).

efforts were directed towards the purification of literary taste and the establishment of Attic ideals in oratory and prose style. This was made plain, on the one hand, by his work *Against the Phrygians*, an attack on the licence of the Asiatic school; and on the other, by his treatise *On the Ten Attic Orators*, in which he attempted to characterise the qualities of each orator in question. In this latter work, moreover, occurred the first specific reference to the canon of ten Attic orators, an arbitrary grouping probably drawn from Hellenistic authorities; and his treatment of the subject is not without its interest, for he prefaced a brief biography to his appreciation of each orator's style. Apart from this, he would seem to have written an *Art of Rhetoric* and a treatise *On Figures*, besides inquiring into the authenticity of the speeches of Demosthenes and Lysias. He is said also to have attempted at least two comparative studies, one of Demosthenes and Aeschines as masters of Attic style, another of Demosthenes and Cicero which was afterwards attacked by Plutarch; and whatever may have been the defects of these particular works, they point to an extension of critical methods and to a new perception of the value of comparative criticism. But of the greatest historical interest is his treatise *On the Sublime*, which inspired the later work of "Longinus" on the same theme. "Longinus" wrote dissatisfied with this earlier treatment, though commending the choice of subject; and from his remarks on the shortcomings of Caecilius's treatise may be gathered some idea of the nature of that work.¹ Its main object, so it would seem, had been to define "the sublime", without indicating however how such effects were to be obtained. Certain sources of "the sublime" were indeed pointed out, the use of Figures and tropes for instance; but of the elevation that springs from emotion or passion nothing was said, and this appears to have been the chief ground of complaint. Apart from this, Caecilius, we gather, had also made use of abundant illustrative passages, quoting for example from Timaeus instances of frigidity, from Theopompus phrases of false wit, while preferring the correctness of Lysias to the brilliance of Plato. With some of his judgments "Longinus" disagreed, viewing

¹ See p. 217 *infra*.

them as work of an academic and conventional kind. Yet Caecilius's position in this respect is otherwise clear; he was advocating a return to Attic models and an avoidance of all that was erratic, distorted, and false. In general, it may be surmised, his treatment doubtless lacked the inspired insight of the later work; though, on the other hand, "Longinus" was possibly indebted to him for certain details, his famous reference to Hebrew literature, for instance, and his brilliant comparison between Demosthenes and Cicero. With Dionysius, however, Caecilius may safely be ranked as an active influence on his age. He was an agent in furthering the classical movement in Augustan Rome; and the lessons he appears to have taught his contemporaries were of an opportune, if also of a limited, kind.

In now turning to Dionysius of Halicarnassus as the leading authority on rhetorical theory at this date we are obviously on safer ground. Of his critical writings (and they are not a few), most have happily survived; and they form a body of literary studies, varying in aim and character, which give evidence of many-sided interests, in addition to wide learning and sound taste. As to the dates of these writings no certain evidence has come down; but all were probably composed during the author's period at Rome (30-8 B.C.) and thus deal with definite contemporary problems. The clearest and most systematic exposition of his ideas and principles will be found in his treatise *On the Arrangement of Words* (*περὶ συνθέσεως ὀνομάτων*); and this work, which in some ways is the most remarkable of his writings, is, like Horace's *Ars Poetica*, addressed to one of his pupils. His main theme, he asserted, was one that had hitherto been inadequately treated, more attention having been paid to the choice of words; and while he recognised the importance of other factors in oratory (or prose-writing), he proposed to discuss more particularly the effects of an artistic word-order. After brief introductory remarks on the nature of "composition" in general (cc. 1-5), he proceeds to treat of its technique, those processes which give to words their heightened powers. Of their arrangement in clauses he has but little to say (cc. 6-9), whereas the gist of his theorising is contained in the chapters that follow (cc. 10-20). There he expounds the prin-

ciples that underlie the charm and beauty of expression in words, those subtle effects that result from an appropriate word-order; after which he refers to the three main varieties of word-arrangement, the austere, the smooth, and the harmoniously blended (cc. 21-4), and concludes with some comments on the relations between poetry and prose (cc. 25-6). Nor can his treatment be said to be inadequate to his theme; for in spite of technicalities and limitations of subject he succeeds in giving to his teaching a living interest. And he does so by the suggestiveness of his occasional remarks, by the skill with which he touches on fundamental problems; and in addition his treatment is illuminated throughout by extracts culled from Greek classical literature, including two poems of which no other traces exist, namely, Sappho's *Hymn to Aphrodite* and Simonides's *Danae*.

Complementary, in a sense, to this exposition of principles is his treatise *On Ancient Orators* (περὶ τῶν ἀρχαίων ῥητόρων ὑπομνηματισμοί), perhaps the most familiar of his writings, and one which had for its object not so much a series of appreciations as a considered account of the development of Attic oratory and of those orators who could be accepted as models for oratory (and prose-writing) of all kinds. He therefore avoids the canon of the "ten orators" because such a selection had no relation to the purpose in hand. The work as originally planned consisted of two parts, the first part dealing with the "inventors" of oratory, with Lysias, Isocrates, and Isaeus, the second part with those who were claimed to have perfected oratory, namely, Demosthenes, Hyperides, and Aeschines; and thus a notable attempt was made to trace the historical development of the art. Of the work itself the first part alone has come down; though the account of Demosthenes may possibly have survived in an enlarged form in the essay *On the Eloquence of Demosthenes*, a separate piece of work to which high praise has been given. From the surviving section, however, some idea may be formed of the treatment of the work *On Ancient Orators*, and of the methods adopted in discussing each orator. Thus each account began with certain biographical details, which were followed by appreciations of the orator's style and his skill

in handling his material; and the account was completed with a comparative estimate, and with the addition of a number of quotations by way of illustration. These, then, were the chief attempts made by Dionysius at pronouncing judgments on earlier orators and prose-writers; though to complete the list, mention must also be made of his treatise *On Thucydides*, in which the subject-matter and style of the historian are discussed, as well as the work *On Dinarchus*, where the interest is chiefly of a bibliographical kind, the main object being to distinguish between the genuine and spurious speeches of that orator. Altogether they constitute a considerable body of literary judgments; and in spite of shortcomings, both in method and taste, they form a valuable contribution to the all too scanty output of judicial criticism in antiquity.

Of topical interest mainly, as illustrating the questions that were being discussed at the time, are his three epistolary essays, all of which are more or less polemical in kind. His *First Letter to Ammaeus*, for instance, deals with a problem of literary history. In it Dionysius succeeds in confuting the theory, which had been maintained in the presence of Ammaeus, of Demosthenes's supposed indebtedness to Aristotle for his art. By an examination of dates it is shown that Aristotle's *Rhetoric* had been preceded by the orations of Demosthenes; and in this way fresh light was thrown on an earlier chapter of literary history, and certain chronological details of value preserved for the use of posterity. His *Second Letter to Ammaeus* represents work of a different kind. In it Dionysius attempts to supplement at the request of his correspondent some earlier remarks of his on the style of Thucydides; and this he does by a detailed examination of the grammatical and linguistic peculiarities of Thucydides's idiom, so that the interest of the *Letter* is mainly of a technical kind. In the *Letter to Gnaeus Pompeius*, however, he reverts to literary matters. He is defending primarily his earlier attitude to Plato as a stylist; and he explains his reasons for his qualified praise, adding subsequently some comparative estimates of Herodotus, Thucydides, and Xenophon as stylists, which include a relevant extract taken from yet another of his writings, the treatise *On Imitation*. Of this latter work a few fragments are

all that remain, the most valuable being that section containing his judgments on earlier Greek writers. Dionysius himself tells us¹ that the work originally consisted of three parts, the first part dealing with imitation in general, the second with the choice of writers for imitation (poets, philosophers, historians, and orators), and the third (unfinished) with the proper methods of imitation. Later on, the same subject is treated on lines closely parallel by Quintilian in his *Institutio Oratoria* (x, i). There may be detected the same heads of treatment, reminiscences too of the earlier appreciations; but while it is possible that the later rhetorician had the work of Dionysius before him when writing, thus reflecting in some measure the teaching of Dionysius, more probably he was drawing on some earlier common source. What cannot be doubted, however, is that Dionysius's treatise must have been a representative work of the time; for the problem of imitation was present in the minds of most of his contemporaries. Had the treatise survived, fresh light of a valuable kind would have been forthcoming on the theorising of the age; and its loss must be regarded as a serious misfortune.

Such then is the list of Dionysius's contributions to criticism; and to all appearances they represent a series of isolated occasional studies without any very obvious animating purpose, or anything like a coherent body of doctrine. Yet nothing is more certain than that all alike were written with one and the same object in view. Whether the immediate purpose be that of expounding some aspect of prose style or the merits of an earlier writer, in either case the discussion will be found to revolve around the same ideas and to be directed to the same ultimate end; and that end was, broadly speaking, a continuation of Cicero's purpose, the establishment of correct standards and methods in oratory and prose style. At the same time, it must be added, the attitude of Dionysius differs somewhat from that of Cicero, to whom the challenge of Asianism had presented itself with considerable force, and who therefore had dealt with some of its chief excesses. By Dionysius's day, however, the Atticist movement had gathered strength and was

¹ *Letter to Pompeius*, III (766-7).

offering to Asianism a sterner opposition; so that Dionysius's aim becomes not so much the discrediting of Asianism as the clarifying of the views of contemporary Atticists. This at least is suggested by his scanty references to Asianism, that "foolish and depraved eloquence"¹ which he was inclined to think would not survive another generation. So that his task is essentially of a positive and constructive kind. He brings to the notice of orators and prose-writers (λογογράφοι, συγγραφείς) the best Attic models, pointing out what in them was admirable and therefore worthy of imitation; and this he does partly by means of theorising, partly also by appreciations of earlier writers.

In his work as a theorist there is much that is of the first importance; though so far from attempting a complete theory of rhetoric he confines himself mainly to certain aspects of prose style, incidentally revealing at the same time some of his more general principles. In the first place there can be no doubt as to his basic and guiding principle. In all he wrote one idea was uppermost; the necessity for adopting, where prose-writing was concerned, the standards and methods of the classical Greeks. Thus it is with the great writers of the fourth century B.C. and earlier that he almost exclusively deals; and it is their work that he sets up as models for imitation. Concerning the process of imitation he has also something to say, though his full teaching on the subject has unhappily been lost. Imitation in general he describes as "a copying of models with the help of certain principles" (ἐνέργεια διὰ τῶν θεωρημάτων ἐκματτομένη τὸ παράδειγμα);² and he further justifies the process as being, in an enthusiastic form (ζήλος), "an activity of the soul inspired by the spectacle of the seemingly beautiful" (ἐνέργεια ψυχῆς πρὸς θαῦμα τοῦ δοκοῦντος εἶναι καλοῦ κινουμένη).³ Nor can it be doubted that among the principles laid down in connexion with imitation was that which required the merits and not the defects of the model to be copied. Dionysius says as much in at least one passage;⁴ but the idea is implicit in all his judgments, which are made with the object of distinguishing what should be

¹ *Anc. Orat.* § 3.

² *Ibid.*

³ *On Imit.* A, III (28).

⁴ *On Thuc.* c. 55.

imitated and what avoided in each writer. Apart from this, nothing is more characteristic of his general theory than the stress he lays on the need for the employment of art, for careful reading and practice. He is no doubt repeating a familiar commonplace when he states that "the three things most helpful for political oratory and for all arts and sciences are a gifted nature, accurate study and laborious practice" (*φύσις δεξιά, μάθησις ἀκριβής, ἀσκησις ἐπίπονος*).¹ But the point is one to which he makes repeated and various reference, insisting for instance that to such things must be attributed the excellences of Demosthenes, or again, that rules drawn from manuals would not ensure success to one who dispensed with wide reading and practice.² A closely allied doctrine is that which requires careful workmanship and hard toil on the part of the artist; and this draws from Dionysius one of his most spirited passages, directed probably against the contemporary "scribblers". Both Homer and Demosthenes he had represented as conscious, even meticulous, artists; he now recalls the *labor limae* devoted by Isocrates and Plato to their respective works; while he condemns the saying attributed to Epicurus that "writing was no trouble" as being merely an excuse for laziness and stupidity.³

It is, however, not so much in his general theory of art as in his treatment of prose style, and more especially, certain aspects of that style, that Dionysius may be said to have broken new ground. He is aware, in the first place, that all good speaking (and writing) depends on ideas and expression, on subject-matter and style; he further concedes that style must in general be subordinate to sense, if any question of priority should ever arise.⁴ And yet in his theorising he confines his attention to matters of style; and this he does, so he explains, because the theme was likely to prove more congenial to the young pupil he was addressing than any disquisition on that subject-matter which had hitherto monopolised the attention of the schools. Concerning style in general, however, he has but little to say, beyond remarking as a preliminary that a full treatment of the subject would involve a consideration of the

¹ *On Imt.* A, II (27).

² *Arr. of Words*, c. 26 (p. 282, W. R. R.).

³ *Ibid.* cc. 24, 25.

⁴ *On Isoc.* c. 12.

proper choice of words as well as of their arrangement, and that it was his intention to limit himself solely to a discussion of the latter and less familiar theme. At the same time something of his views on the wider questions of style may indirectly be gathered from his treatment of the more limited subject, so that we are not entirely without some idea of that general theory of his upon which much of his judicial criticism was based. Thus, for instance, it can scarcely be doubted that in stating that an author's arrangement of his words is no mechanical business but something individual and personal,¹ he is at the same time implying the wider doctrine, already enunciated by Plato and Cicero, that style was essentially a reflexion of the writer's character. Or again, there is his statement that a writer in arranging his words should aim at the effects of charm (ἡδονή) and beauty (τὸ καλόν).² This, too, he would doubtless have applied to style in the wider sense; at all events the idea is reminiscent of Horace's pronouncement on the aesthetic effects to be aimed at in poetry.³ It is true that there are differences in their respective uses of these terms. To Horace, for instance, the requirements apparently are charm or emotional value (*dulcia*) and beauty or formal excellence (*pulchra*); whereas to Dionysius charm (ἡδονή) stood for such qualities as freshness, grace, euphony, sweetness and persuasiveness, beauty (τὸ καλόν) on the other hand, for grandeur, impressiveness, solemnity, dignity, mellowness and the like.⁴ But there can be no doubt as to the common origin and general bearing of the theories; and Dionysius enlarges further on the matter when he states that charm and beauty are not always found in the same writer. Nor is this all that can be gleaned of Dionysius's views on style in general; it is clear, for one thing, that he had adopted the so-called Theophrastan distinction of the three-fold variety of diction, namely, the elevated and elaborate, the smooth and plain, the mixed and composite,⁵ as well as the three kinds of "composition", the austere, the smooth, and the harmoniously blended.⁶ Then, too, from certain judgments of his on earlier prose-writers his classification of

¹ *Arr. of Words*, c. 21.² *Ibid.* c. 10.³ See p. 77 *supra*.⁴ *Ibid.* c. 11.⁵ *On Dem.* cc. 1-3.⁶ *Arr. of Words*, cc. 22-4. See vol. I, 156.

those qualities that went to the making of good prose style can incidentally be gathered. The essential virtues he deems to be purity of language, perspicuity and conciseness. But there are other qualities as well which he describes as accessory virtues; and they are vividness (*ἐνάργεια*), power of characterisation, loftiness and grandeur, energy and strength, grace and persuasiveness, and above all, propriety, which is described as the supreme literary virtue.¹

Such scattered details as these do not, however, represent the main substance of Dionysius's teaching on style. For that we must turn to his treatment of the arrangement of words (*σύνθεσις*, *compositio*), a subject which had formed part of every rhetorician's instruction on style (*λέξις*, *elocutio*), but to which Dionysius now succeeded in giving new life and meaning. His main purpose was to point out new graces possible to artists in words; and it is therefore not strange to find that he has in the first place something of note to say about words themselves and their aesthetic value. According to Cicero, Julius Caesar had already insisted that the secret of eloquence lay in the choice of suitable words (*delectus verborum origo est eloquentiae*);² and among Dionysius's most significant utterances is that which asserts the innate beauty of words. It is a beauty, he maintains, independent of their meaning, the result rather of their formal qualities; so that his conclusion is that "beauty of words is due to beauty of syllables and letters", and that "style is beautiful when it embodies beautiful words".³ At the same time he is careful to bring out the potentialities of words in everyday use. Aristotle had previously shown that ordinary words were conducive to clearness of expression; Dionysius now adds that they, and not some selected jargon, were the stuff out of which literature was made. No word, however hackneyed, he stated, was out of place in literature, provided that it carried with it no disgraceful association.⁴ And he illustrates his point by recalling an exquisite passage from the *Odyssey*, in which Homer had obtained his effects by means of the homeliest words; by

¹ *Letter to Pompeius*, III (776).

² Cic. *Brutus*, LXXVII, 253.

³ *Art. of Words*, c. 16 (p. 160, W. R. R.).

⁴ *Ibid.* c. 12 (p. 134, W. R. R.).

words, as he says, that a farmer, a sailor, or an artisan might well have used.¹

With these ideas in mind Dionysius then proceeds to elaborate his views concerning the most effective arrangement of words for literary purposes. He is dealing primarily with Greek, and in this he denies the existence of a natural or inevitable word-order. Nor, on the other hand, does he take cognizance of that grammatical order which, sanctioned by common usage, had in practice become recognised as the normal word-order and a factor conducive to clearness and lucidity of expression. Such an arrangement of words Dionysius however seems to have taken for granted, as well as the necessity for clear and logical utterance. They were matters that had been sufficiently stressed by Aristotle, Cicero, and others; and Dionysius's references to them are consequently of an indirect and a casual kind. It is true that he includes perspicuity among the essential virtues of style; but his main teaching on the subject is of a negative sort, and is to be found in his not infrequent strictures on obscurity in general, and on the obscurity of Thucydides in particular.² At the same time what he wishes more especially to establish is the fact that to write grammatically and logically is not enough; and he aims at inculcating that heightened style which is the outcome of an artistic arrangement of words. By his contemporary, Horace, some consideration was at the time being given to the question in its relation to poetry. But that treatment, though suggestive, was somewhat slight and lacking in detail. Horace merely hints at the value of a skilful verbal setting; its power of transforming familiar words and of giving to poetic expression an element of fine surprise. Dionysius on the other hand sets out to discuss the matter in all its bearings, and in its relation to poetry and prose alike; and he does so with an insight and an enthusiasm that render this part of his teaching a permanent addition to critical theory.

In the first place he is aware that arrangement or "composition" in its widest sense includes the treatment not only of words but of clauses and periods as well. There must be an

¹ *Arr. of Words*, c. 3 (p. 78, W. R. R.).

² *On Thuc.* c. 52; 2 *Ep. Ann.* c. 15.

appropriate distribution of thought into periods; clauses too must be fashioned with a view to harmony, rhythm, and balance.¹ But these matters receive from him but summary treatment, his attention being concentrated on the suitable placing of words; and he is at pains at the outset to emphasise the importance of his subject. Thus, he asserts, it is the arrangement, rather than the words themselves, that gives fascination to literary expression; for beautiful words to be effective have to be suitably arranged, whereas commonplace words in a proper setting may still take on a beauty of their own.² It is the same, he points out, with such arts as architecture or embroidery; there too, it is the arrangement rather than the material that counts. And he further illustrates his doctrine by the Homeric passage already mentioned; from which, he contends, the whole beauty would vanish, if the word-order were destroyed. In short, to him, the main difference between poet and poet lay in the skill with which they arranged their words; and he complains of the literary decline which had resulted from the neglect of this principle both in theory and practice, as was seen in the writings of Polybius and others.³

His main object is therefore to analyse the effects of an artistic word-order and if possible to explain their causes; though at the same time he is conscious of some magic at work which must elude his analysis, as when he likens its operation to the touch of Athena's wand, transforming prince into beggar and beggar into prince. Despite this hint of the presence of something beyond the reach of art, Dionysius proceeds with the matter in hand; and assuming that charm and beauty are the ends in view, he finds that those effects may be attained in the arrangement of words, firstly by means of euphony, secondly by rhythm, thirdly by variety, and lastly by an appropriateness which is said to govern all other devices.⁴ Concerning euphony or the music of words, to begin with, he has much to say; and the secret of that music he traces to its ultimate elements, namely, the phonetic values of individual letters and syllables. In a highly technical passage he distinguishes between the euphonious

¹ *Arr. of Words*, cc. 6-9.

² *Ibid.* c. 4 (p. 94, W. R. R.).

³ *Ibid.* c. 3.

⁴ *Ibid.* c. 11.

qualities of the various vowels and consonants. The long vowels he describes as the more musical; and he arranges them roughly in a descending order of musical quality, α (\bar{a}), η (\bar{e}), ω (\bar{o}), υ (\bar{u}), ι (\bar{i}). The short vowels he regards as less musical; and while assigning to liquid and nasal consonants λ , μ , ν , ρ (l , m , n , r) some degree of beauty, the remaining consonants he regards as distinctly unmusical, particularly σ (s) with its hissing disagreeable effects.¹ Such then was the material at the disposal of the artist in words; and his success depended in part on his skilful manipulation of letters so as to produce a verbal music out of the endless permutations of vowel and consonant. To all the great Greeks Dionysius attributed an instinctive perception of these facts; and he illustrates how Homer had adapted his word-music to the emotions he wished to represent, how too in employing words that were naturally discordant he had obtained the effects of harmony by blending with such words elements of a melodious kind.² Thus did Dionysius insist on the need for euphony in style. To him it was an essential; an ever-present undertone that gave to expression a subtle charm of its own, while at the same time responding to one of the deepest instincts in man.

Hardly less important however are the rhythmical effects in style, to which Dionysius next calls attention; and here he is enlarging on a doctrine that was as old as Aristotle. He points out that every word of more than one syllable has a rhythm of sorts, that every rhythm carries with it its own psychological effects; and he proceeds to characterise briefly the basic rhythms which enter into all expression, whether metrical or unmetrical. Of the twelve that he mentions the following are perhaps the most familiar: the spondaic (— —) which he describes as dignified, the iambic (— —) as not ignoble, the trochaic (— —) as less manly and noble, the anapaestic (— — —) as stately, grand, pathetic, and the dactylic (— — —) as impressive and conducive to beauty of style.³ It is by the use of rhythm, he points out, that colour is given to style, rhythms noble and dignified producing style that is noble and dignified; so that

¹ *Arr. of Words*, c. 14 (pp. 144-6, W. R. R.).

² *Ibid.* cc. 15-16.

³ *Ibid.* c. 17.

much depends on the skill with which words are arranged. Following Aristotle, he declares further that prose must be rhythmical without being metrical, and that all sorts of rhythm find a place in prose. And these remarks he illustrates by analysing the rhythmical characteristics of some of the classical Greeks, which he contrasts in effective fashion with the jerky chaotic manner of Hegesias.¹

So far Dionysius has been treating of the sounds of words, either singly or in combination, and of the general nature of their contribution to the expressive power of style. For an artistic word-order, however, yet other things are necessary; and in emphasising at this stage the need for a constant variety of effect, both melodic and rhythmical, he touches upon another of the guiding principles of style. Thus he requires to be maintained a subtle intermixture of sounds; short vowels alternating with long, melodious consonants with harsh consonants, monosyllabic words with polysyllabic words, besides ever-varying case-endings and an avoidance of nouns and verbs in close succession.² In prose, as distinct from verse, he further points out, greater freedom in this respect is possible; and he commends a diversity of effect obtained by varying the lengths of periods and clauses, and by changes of harmony, rhythm, and Figures of speech.³ At the same time, he is careful to add, the principle must not be carried to excess; for there are conditions under which uniformity may be more effective and pleasing. Nevertheless, in general, the doctrine he maintains to be sound, and this on psychological grounds; first, because variety affords pleasure in all human activities by relieving monotony, and in the second place, since variety in expression gives the appearance of artlessness and naturalness, by suggesting that "what is so composed is not artificially composed at all".⁴

And this brings Dionysius to the last and most important of his guiding principles: the necessity for observing propriety or *decorum* in the arrangement of words. This he describes as the quality upon which all the other effects depend;

¹ *Arr. of Words*, c. 18 (p. 184, W. R. R.).

² *Ibid.* c. 12.

³ *Ibid.* c. 19 (p. 196, W. R. R.).

⁴ *Ibid.*

if this be wanting, all charm and beauty vanish. And here he is emphasising that doctrine of Cicero and Horace, which had indeed been characteristic of the whole teaching of antiquity. As to its application to the matter in hand he has no definite rules to offer, apart from requiring that the arrangement of words, like the choice of words, must be in keeping with the subject-matter and conditions of utterance. On the other hand he would seem to imply that suitable tones and rhythms are the result not of rules but of aesthetic tact on the part of the writer. This at least he maintains is true of Homer; and he illustrates that poet's keen sense of propriety from his subtle variation of effects in accordance with the changing sense of his narrative.¹

Such then is the gist of Dionysius's teaching on style, which was concerned for the most part with the art of "composition", with euphonic and symphonic qualities of style, and with the laws underlying an artistic word-order. Closely bound up with this theorising, however, and bearing even more directly on contemporary problems, is his judicial criticism, the judgments he is continually passing on earlier Greek writers; and here we have another and a yet more important aspect of Dionysius's work as a critic. From none of his writings are these judgments entirely absent; though in one place at least, in his work *On Imitation*, the "censures" are largely of a conventional kind, brief commonplace statements that do not take us far. But for the rest, his comments are animated by one dominating motive, the desire of guiding his generation in their imitation of the Greeks, and of bringing to light the genuine Attic ideals in oratory and prose style. With this object in view he endeavours to set the ancient writers in their proper perspective, and, by assigning to each his place in the development, to indicate those who afforded the safest models. And in this way he reviews the performances of writers who were influencing the Atticists of his day; he gives sound advice on the general question, some valuable appreciations too of many of the writers; and incidentally he has something to say on poets and poetry, in sporadic judgments and appreciations of a new and illuminating kind.

¹ *Arr. of Words*, c. 20.

Of great interest, in the first place, are the views he puts forward concerning the main lines of the development of Attic prose. And for those views we must turn to his works as a whole, to those works in which a pioneer stage is outlined, as well as to the *Ancient Orators* in which subsequent developments are treated at yet greater length. From the first, moreover, it is clear that what he has in mind is not oratory solely, but the larger questions as well of Attic literary prose. In the *Ancient Orators* it is true he confines himself to oratory; but even there he makes plain his intention of dealing with the historians later. And this he does elsewhere in his treatment of Thucydides, Herodotus and others; while constant references are made to prose and prose-writers generally. The result of his survey is the selection of certain representative writers who illustrate the various changes undergone by Attic prose. There is first the earliest transitional phase which is presupposed in the *Ancient Orators*, and which is discussed elsewhere as the "austere" style associated with Thucydides and others. It was a prose, we are told,¹ that aimed primarily at dignity, intensity, and crudity of strength, employing for that purpose imposing, often unusual, words, and relying for much of its effect on single words conspicuously placed. So far from utilising periods as the normal framework for its thought, it scorned as a rule all artificial smoothness, preferring rather a rough-hewn quality, with detached clauses and incomplete periods, with irregularities of syntax and frequent clashes of sound. The result of such methods was a rugged unadorned style which appealed strongly to the feelings; and its attraction lay in its air of spontaneity, its suggestion of a negligent and an old-world charm. With the completion of this archaic stage there followed, according to Dionysius, certain innovations due to Lysias, and characteristic of the style which, in contrast to the manner of many earlier orators and writers, was known as the "plain" style. It was to all appearances the most artless of styles, based on a diction that was neither archaic nor poetic, but made up of ordinary words used in their normal senses,² used too with a simplicity and a versatility that was something new. The structure of its

¹ *Arr. of Words*, c. 22.

² *On Lys.* c. 2.

sentences varied according to the subject; for public speeches there was adopted a periodic rhythmical form, for speech of a private character a form more free and casual.¹ And this absence of formality characterised the style throughout; it was clear, dramatic, terse, and vivid, carefully avoiding for the most part figurative language, yet giving to plain words a distinction and grace of their own.² What was lacking in the style was intensity and force;³ it was incapable of great flights or strenuous appeals. On the other hand its main effects were naturalness and charm, and these were qualities unobtrusively obtained by a careful concealment of art. Yet the evolution of this "plain" style was not the only change detected by Dionysius in the development of Attic prose. He notes one further representative tendency in the "middle or florid" style of which Isocrates was the founder and chief exponent.⁴ It was a style that in its essentials differed widely from the manner of Thucydides and in a lesser degree from the "plain" style of Lysias. Its diction was said to be based on a selection of ordinary words tending towards the ornate, though at the same time free from forms obsolete or poetical. What gave to it however its distinctive character was its smoothness of movement, its regular and harmonious cadences, its freedom from rough syllables and clashing sounds. It was moreover a periodic style, with clauses interwoven and running into periods, with luxuriant figures, ample and balanced rhythms; so that its main effects were smoothness, symmetry, and grandeur, qualities which for the most part had been wanting in the earlier styles.

These, then, in Dionysius's view, were the three progressive phases in the history of Attic prose. Amidst the varieties of style associated with Greek orators and writers of the classical period he perceived an evolutionary process at work, giving rise at each stage to clearly marked tendencies, and finding expression in certain characteristic styles. But this was not all; for these tendencies, he maintained, culminated in a yet more mature prose, in which the earlier characteristics were merged, thus producing in their variety a more complete expression of the Attic spirit. And this mature prose he found in the work

¹ *On Lys.* c. 8. ² *Ibid.* cc. 4, 8. ³ *Ibid.* c. 13. ⁴ *Arr. of Words*, c. 23.

of Hyperides and Aeschines, and in a supreme degree in the work of Demosthenes; for the two former orators he commends with some amount of reservation. Demosthenes on the other hand he regards as the fitting representative of this final stage, and therefore the most finished exponent of Attic prose; and his claims Dionysius establishes on no uncertain grounds. In Demosthenes, he maintains, the peculiar excellences of the earlier styles were successfully blended. Employing ordinarily the "middle" style, he also made use of the other two where necessary; and in so doing he is said to have surpassed all others, excelling the archaic school in clearness, the "plain" school in power and force, and the "middle" school in variety and propriety. Thus his style, it was claimed,¹ belonged to no one type; he was the disciple of no one master. He saw that all earlier styles were inadequate in themselves, unfinished and incomplete. And selecting from each its most useful features he fashioned a new and Protean style of his own, which represented for Dionysius the highest reach of Attic expression, and as such was the natural model for those who wished to write in the Attic vein. It was a judgment that had already been anticipated by Cicero² and others; but the doctrine had not hitherto been put forward in so reasoned or convincing a fashion, or as the result of argument based on historical facts.

One result of Dionysius's historical survey is thus the establishment of the claims of Demosthenes to rank as the supreme type and sole model of Attic prose. And this position he confirms by pointing to the inadequacy of other prose-writers, and the various imperfections of their prose styles that made them undesirable as models. In Thucydides, for instance, he sees merely a pioneer in expression, possessing natural abilities enough, but deficient in those graces associated with Attic art. That his style had power, emotional quality, "an antique and self-willed beauty"³ Dionysius does not deny; but it was also harsh, discordant, formless, and above all obscure. His language is said to have been unique even in his own day; there were but few who understood the whole of Thucydides,

¹ *On Dem.* cc. 3, 33, 34.

² See p. 36 *supra*.

³ *Art. of Words*, c. 22 (p. 228, W. R. R.).

we are told, and they required the help of a commentary.¹ And to this obscurity his constructions contributed not a little; he employed in a confused fashion grammatical genders, numbers, and voices, and with him attempts at brevity often led to further obscurity.² Then, too, while fully recognising the mastery of Isocrates in his own particular vein, Dionysius maintains that he also falls short of the perfect model. He bears testimony to the finish, the amplitude, the music and grandeur of Isocrates's style; but that style, he asserts, was lacking in variety and fire. And he explains how, in his excessive regard for rounded periods and the like, Isocrates would sometimes distort the natural form of expression, sacrificing matter to manner and truth to elegance;³ so that the thought became the slave of rhythmical expression, instead of dictating the form, as was the correct procedure. Hence in his writing a certain monotony, diffuseness, and tameness; also a suggestion of artifice arising out of an excess of art. At its best its effects were those of "a clear river luring the reader on through the soft beauties of its wandering course";⁴ at its worst, it was said to be un-inspired and verbose, "gliding smoothly and gently through the ear like oil".⁵ Or again, there was Plato; he too was said to have qualities which rendered him unsafe as a guide in matters of style. According to Dionysius,⁶ he attempted to embrace two styles, the elaborate and the plain; and while his success in the latter vein is not questioned, in the former he is described as obscure, prolix, and erratic, owing mainly to the blunders he makes in his choice of diction. And these defects are illustrated by the dithyrambic manner he employed in his attempts at elevation, where he is charged with having used strange archaic terms, harsh and loose epithets, and tedious poetic Figures. In that style he was said to have been influenced by the artificial manner of Gorgias; and the imitation of such prose, according to Dionysius, was apt to lead men into foolish extravagance.

¹ *On Thuc.* c. 51.

² *Ibid.* cc. 24-5; 2 *Ep. Amm. passim.*

³ *On Isoc.* cc. 2, 3, 12.

⁴ *On Dem.* c. 4.

⁵ *Ibid.* c. 18.

⁶ *Letter to Pompeius*, II (758-66); *On Dem.* cc. 5-7.

With these judgments on the merits of Attic prose-writers the immediate ends of Dionysius's judicial criticism may be said to have been attained. The place of Demosthenes as the all-sufficient model had been established; the limitations of other Atticist models had been revealed; and a much-debated question of the age had been finally solved. Not that the exposition is altogether free from the suggestion of special pleading, as indeed the inadequate appreciation of Plato as a stylist goes to show. Yet in the main, the perspective and the judgments were sound, and with the analysis in its broad outline later scholarship is in general agreement. At the same time Dionysius's examination of Greek literature yields further results of value; and not least, a number of notable appreciations which, while marking a distinct advance in the business of forming aesthetic judgment, also reveal in Dionysius a critic of outstanding quality and power. And nowhere is this more apparent than in his ability to rise to the greatness of his theme in dealing with the great masters. Concerning Lysias, for example, he has much to say that is illuminating, apart from the summary treatment already outlined. Thus while enlarging on Lysias's many-sided art, and noting among other original features his dramatic sense, his power of portraying character, he is nevertheless conscious of something that has escaped his analysis, a certain characteristic charm that defies definition, and can no more be explained than the elusive beauty of a face or of some musical cadence. This he describes as the decisive factor in Lysias's style, the subtlest quality of his work, to be apprehended only by a cultivated instinct on the part of the critic.¹ And nowhere does Dionysius reveal a keener artistic sensibility; for this quality in Lysias was one that had been passed over by Roman critics, who had praised merely his simplicity, his elegance and polish. Or again, there is his appreciation of Demosthenes which in places touches greatness, and becomes a by no means inadequate commentary on the grandeur of his style. Abandoning for the time being his vein of cold analysis, Dionysius anticipates "Longinus" in applying as his test the emotional appeal or "transport"; and then we get criticism

¹ *On Lys.* c. 11.

of the most convincing kind. "When I take up one of his speeches", writes Dionysius,¹ "I am entranced and carried hither and thither, stirred now by one emotion, now by another. I feel distrust, anxiety, fear, disdain, hatred, pity, good-will, anger, jealousy. I am agitated by every passion in turn that can sway the human heart, and I am like those who are being initiated into wild mystic rites." The best criticism has been described as "the praise, the infectious praise", of great literature; and this enthusiastic judgment of Dionysius's not only helps us to apprehend the power of Demosthenes, but it enables us to feel it too, and that in a superlative degree.

Equally striking, though in a different way, are his remarks on Homer, where he calls attention to certain aspects of Homeric art, and interprets in detailed fashion the aesthetic value of that art. Of his references to Homer's skill in employing ordinary words something has already been said. Of yet greater significance are his remarks on the tone-colours of Homer's verse, on the use he makes of subtly-affiliated sounds to reinforce by suggestion the power and meaning of his words. In Homer indeed he recognises a master of verbal music. He is Homer "the many-voiced", who, with but one metre and a limited number of rhythms, was for ever creating new harmonies and tones that changed in accordance with the changes of his subject-matter.² And this he is said to have accomplished through his keen sense of the sound-value of words, his recognition of the need for propriety in expression, and of the intimate relations existing between thought and style. But while these are in substance Dionysius's main comments on Homer, yet more significant are the illustrations he gives, which in method and result alike stand for something new in critical work. Not content with mere assertions about aesthetic qualities in the abstract, Dionysius places before his readers actual passages of Homer, and by means of relevant comments he brings vividly to their notice the varied melody of the verse. Thus he illustrates from the Homeric epics the poet's artistry in different scenes; how, for instance, in a scene descriptive of

¹ *On Dem.* c. 22 (tr. W. R. R.).

² *Arr. of Words*, c. 16 (p. 161, W. R. R.).

the beauty of Penelope (*Od.* xvii, 36-7) the poet packs his line with pleasing vowels and soft liquid consonants, whereas in passages that treat of terror or violence or disaster (*Od.* vi, 137; *Il.* iv, 452-3; *Od.* ix, 289-90), he shows a marked preference for harsher effects, for resounding syllables, arresting pauses and clashing consonants.¹ Elsewhere attention is called to Homer's successful handling of proper names;² and there it is shown how by skilfully interweaving sounds both musical and unmusical, the poet has invested a list of towns (*Il.* ii, 494-501) with poetic quality, giving to them a beauty and a magnificence derived wholly from their setting. For the most characteristic and familiar of such critical comments we must, however, turn to his remarks on the Homeric passage in which the torments of Sisyphus are described (*Od.* xi, 593-8);³ and his treatment here calls for a more detailed consideration as representing in the fullest fashion his theory and methods. His object is to bring out the degree in which the words as arranged reflect and reinforce the thought; and this he does by a minute analysis in which the manifold effects of the Homeric lines are revealed. As is well known, the task of Sisyphus was that of rolling up-hill a huge stone which on reaching the top was always hurled back again. And Dionysius first shows how in the lines descriptive of the toilsome ascent—

ἥ τοι ὁ μὲν σκηριπτόμενος χερσὶν τε ποσὶν τε
 λαβὼν ἄνω ὤθεσκε ποτὶ λόφον. (*Il.* 595-6.)

(There pressing alike with his hands and his feet he heaved the rock to a high hill's crest.)—

the laboriousness, the straining, the slow and hampered movement, are all vividly suggested. This he explains as partly due to the broken character of the lines, where, all the words except two being either monosyllabic or dissyllabic, a protracted movement is indicated by the frequent intervals. Moreover, he points to the predominance of dactylic and spondaic rhythms with their giant-like stride, to the clashings of vowels and the presence of harsh consonants, all of which betoken the intensity

¹ *Arr. of Words*, c. 16 (p. 165, W. R. R.).

² *Ibid.* (p. 167, W. R. R.).

³ *Ibid.* c. 20 (p. 204, W. R. R.).

and strain of the struggle. Then in the lines that follow different effects are obtained. Sisyphus is about to succeed in thrusting the stone over the top (*ἀλλ' ὅτε μέλλοι ἄκρον ὑπερβαλέειν*), when some overmastering force hurls it back again; and in the succeeding lines—

*τότ' ἐπιστρέψασκε κραταίς·
αὐτίς ἔπειτα πέδονδε κυλίνδετο λᾶας ἀναιδής.*
(ll. 597-8.)

(Some power turned it back again, and then with a rush the pitiless rock went rolling down to the plain.)—

Dionysius points to the skill with which the speed, the impetus, and the downward rush of the stone are indicated. Thus he shows how everything contributes to a swift unbroken movement; the absence of short words with their consequent breaks, the absence too of hiatus with its similar pauses, and on the other hand, the close-fitting junctures, the predominance of short syllables and the prevailing dactylic rhythm, all of which have the effect of speeding-up the narrative and of reflecting in words the incident narrated. In this way, then, does Dionysius succeed in throwing new light on Homer's art; and his treatment here is notable for its methods and results alike. Setting aside discussions of an abstract or general kind, he makes it his business to deal with literature in the concrete, and by a skilful analysis of literary details he endeavours to bring out the aesthetic qualities of a given piece of art. This attitude towards literature was something of an innovation; and so were also the results that accrued. For Dionysius is here concerned not with passing judgment or weighing the merits or defects of Homer as a poet; his object is rather that of interpreting Homer's work, of helping his readers to appreciate and enjoy that work; and this after all is perhaps the most valuable form of criticism. Nor was his interpretation without its wider value; for what he illustrates here is not the mere workings of "representative metre", that device which aims at a mimicry or echo of the sense. What he has primarily in mind is the harmony existing between thought and expression in all great literature, that reinforcement of the power of words which

comes from a suggestive word-order; and this, which he illustrates in connexion with other writers, may be said to have constituted his main teaching throughout his work.

Of the rest of Dionysius's judicial comments, and they are many in number, there is this to be said, that if they lack the penetration and taste of his best achievements, they nevertheless afford evidence of his variety and range of interest, while also throwing light on his methods of work. That he realised to some extent the importance of the historical factor in criticism is perhaps best shown by his masterly exposition of the development of Attic prose. Like Dryden he realises that writers, in verse and prose alike, "have their lineal descents and clans as well as other families";¹ and he frequently notes the influence of one writer upon another, as when, for instance, he mentions that Demosthenes borrowed from Thucydides his rapidity of movement, his terseness and intensity,² or again when he intimates that the oratorical force (*δεινότης*) of the same orator found its inspiration in Isaeus.³ Then, too, he understands the importance of accurate dates in discussing a writer's work, even though he fails to make full use of his historical data. Thus he nowhere traces the development of an orator's art, nor does he consider literature in its relation to the age that produced it. On the other hand he makes good use of the comparative method; and although his aim is often to decide preference, not infrequently he emphasises by the way some of the characteristic features of the writers he is discussing. Lysias for example is said to surpass Isocrates in compactness while yielding to Demosthenes in vigour and life;⁴ he is likewise inferior to Isaeus in power, though superior in tact.⁵ Or again there is the detailed comparison drawn between Thucydides and Herodotus, according to which Thucydides is said to excel in brevity, in strength and energy, whereas the distinction of Herodotus is said to lie in his characterisation, his naturalness and force.⁶ And this treatment is typical of the discussions throughout; in similar fashion he attempts an appreciation of

¹ W. P. Ker, *Essays of Dryden*, II, 247.

³ *On Isaeus*, c. 20. ⁴ *Ibid.* c. 6.

⁶ *Letter to Pompeius*, III (766-77).

² *On Thuc.* c. 53.

⁵ *Ibid.* c. 4.

Xenophon by comparing him with Herodotus, and again of Philistus by comparing him with Thucydides.¹ In addition, it is worthy of note that the analytic treatment of style to which reference has already been made was by no means confined to Homer. It was applied to Thucydides, Isocrates, Demosthenes and others; and while his examination of detail is at times a little fanciful and overwrought, yet it was instrumental in throwing new light on points of style, and at the same time represented a valuable extension of critical method. And for the rest, it might be added, he understands, as did Cicero before him, the value of the picturesque phrase and of analogies drawn from the sister arts in framing his critical appreciations. He speaks, for instance, of "words smooth and soft as a maiden's cheek" (*δρόματα καὶ λεῖα καὶ μαλακὰ καὶ παρθενωπά*);² the architectural effects of the "austere" style he likens to those of a building made up of solid blocks of unworked stone;³ and in comparing the styles of Lysias and Isaeus he uses the terminology of painting, the former being said to resemble a correct draughtsman working in simple colours, the latter a brilliant colourist inferior in form. Thus concerning most of the prose-writers of classical Greece, Dionysius has something of interest to say. With the later developments he is not greatly concerned, though he notes the general decline of style resulting from the neglect of "composition",⁴ and also the recent return to Attic models, which he attributes to the enlightened policy of the ruling classes at Rome.⁵ On Hegesias alone, generally recognised as the founder of the Asiatic school, Dionysius has some remarks to make; and he holds him up to ridicule by parodying his style,⁶ and by comparing a passage of his *History* with a similar descriptive passage from Homer.⁷ In this way he brings out, with some exaggeration it is true, Hegesias's jerkiness of style, its lack of true rhythm; though other defects also emerge, such as its vulgarity of tone and its eccentric word-order. In general, the style is described as "affected, degenerate,

¹ *Letter to Pompeius*, III-v.

² *Arr. of Words*, c. 23 (p. 234, W. R. R.).

³ *Ibid.* c. 22 (p. 210, W. R. R.).

⁴ *Ibid.* c. 4 (p. 94, W. R. R.).

⁵ *Anc. Orat.* proem. c. 3.

⁶ *Arr. of Words*, c. 4 (pp. 90-2, W. R. R.).

⁷ *Ibid.* c. 18 (pp. 184ff., W. R. R.).

and enervated", and with these contemptuous remarks Dionysius summarily dismisses his claim to rank as a model for prose-writers.

From what has now been said of Dionysius's judicial criticism, it will be seen to be of considerable value. Constructive in the main, it embodies some shrewd estimates of Attic writers, some illuminating interpretations of literature itself, while at the same time giving evidence of varied methods, a keen sensibility and taste, and occasionally an enthusiasm that communicates itself to the reader. In certain directions, moreover, Dionysius is something of a pioneer. His treatment of Lysias, for instance, is the best and most complete that has come down from antiquity; and he is the only critic at Rome who deals with Isaeus. Despite all this, however, there are certain features of his work which detract from its value, and seriously limit his usefulness as a judicial critic. For one thing he concerns himself mainly with formal technique apart from subject-matter, thus ignoring the organic relations existing between the two, as well as the part played in all expression by logical connexion of thought. Occasionally, it is true, he has something helpful to say on subject-matter, as when he calls attention to the noble sentiments enshrined in Isocrates's works, or again when he asserts that thought being prior to form must therefore necessarily decide expression.¹ But for the rest his remarks under this head are uninspiring, and, in places, futile. At their best they are reminiscent of the sterile analyses of earlier rhetoricians, with their systematic discussions on the choice (*εὔρεσις*) and arrangement (*οἰκονομία*) of material, and their sub-divisions of "distribution", "order", "treatment of detail", and the like. At their worst they reveal strange and misguided ideas; as when the historical subject chosen by Herodotus is preferred to that of Thucydides, on grounds that can only be described as wholly irrelevant.² And similar traces of the old rhetorical tradition may be detected in his treatment of style. His normal method was to apply as a set formula to each writer in turn his classification of those qualities that constituted good style. Thus he would "test" for purity of language, perspicuity, conciseness,

¹ See p. 113 *supra*.

² *Letter to Pompeius*, III (767).

and then for vividness, characterisation, and the rest.¹ It was a cut-and-dried system not wholly unproductive of results; but one which lacked elasticity, was tedious and mechanical, and was ill-fitted for bringing out the finer shades of style. Then, too, it must be added, in the judgments he submits he is normally pre-occupied with the business of imitation, with the value of the respective writers as models for his contemporaries; so that his appreciations are not wholly based on aesthetic grounds. Thus his guiding idea was to inculcate the greatness of Demosthenes as a model for imitation; and this prevents him from being disinterested or quite just to the others. He is in fact less concerned to bring out the charm of Plato than to establish beyond dispute the supremacy of Demosthenes; and his appreciations are in consequence inadequate and incomplete. Or again, the same incompleteness in his judgments may result from yet another cause, as when they are submitted to illustrate some particular point of theory. This accounts, for instance, for the meagreness of his remarks on Sappho and Pindar. The one he praises merely for her unlaboured ease, the euphony and grace of her language,² the other for the vigour, the dignity and austerity of his style;³ and these comments were clearly offered, not as adequate estimates of the poets, but as illustrations of what were termed the "austere" and "smooth" styles.

Nevertheless, when all is considered, there remains with Dionysius a large body of critical material which has substantial value, as marking an advance on what had gone before. Of his debt to his predecessors it is not easy to speak with any definiteness. More than once in his theorising he asserts his originality; and it is plain that in his theories and judgments alike there is an independent mind at work, letting in fresh light on rhetorical studies. Along with this element of novelty, however, there is evidence that he owes not a little to previous workers, and that his inspiration is drawn in part from the earlier Greek tradition. This at least is clear in those historico-

¹ *Letter to Pompeius*, III, *passim*.

² *Arr. of Words*, c. 23 (pp. 238ff., W. R. R.).

³ *Ibid.* c. 22 (pp. 214ff., W. R. R.).

critical studies in which he is concerned with problems of literary history, with questions of authorship, date, or linguistic usage, thus continuing the Hellenistic activities associated with Alexandria and Pergamum from the third century B.C. onwards. And in yet other respects does indebtedness seem likely, and not least in the nature of his teaching and the theories propounded. He was obviously acquainted, for example, with the rhetorical work of Aristotle, Theophrastus, and Isocrates, to which he makes occasional allusion; he likewise refers to Aristoxenus (300 B.C.), the leading authority of his age on rhythm and music; and of the grammatical writings of the Stoics he betrays a wide and intimate knowledge. Yet to none of these writings can his main inspiration be ultimately due. The closest analogy to his theorising is presented by those Hellenistic scholars of whom we learn from Philodemus, notably Heracleodorus, and the Stoics, Ariston of Chios and Crates of Mallos, who insisted for the first time on the importance of "composition" in poetry, on the need for beautiful words harmoniously arranged, and for those euphonious and rhythmic effects inherent in syllables and letters. Concerning the work of these critics something has already been said;¹ and mention has also been made of the Stoic excellences of style,² with which may be compared the similar list drawn up by Dionysius. And in both cases the parallels will be found to be close; so that it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that, directly or indirectly, the animating ideas of Dionysius were drawn from these sources. It is true that he nowhere acknowledges obligation to any such authorities; but this does not finally dispose of the matter. As the writings of Philodemus and Horace show, the ideas were in the air at the time; and it is improbable that Dionysius was unaware of their existence. Conscious of the need for a more artistic prose he would seem to have adapted the earlier poetic doctrines to the purpose in hand, a proceeding that would be in keeping with the contemporary view of the close relations existing between poetry and rhetoric. In this adaptation, then, would lie the originality of Dionysius; but the basic ideas in all probability were of Hellenistic origin.

¹ Cf. vol. I, 174-6.

² *Ibid.* 175.

But whatever may be said as to the influences visible in Dionysius, there can be little doubt as to the value of his results; and highly significant in the first place are the methods he employs in both theorising and judging. His judicial processes have already been in some measure discussed; his use, for example, of the historical and the comparative methods, his discussion of literature in the concrete, his extension of the critical function so as to include interpretation and appreciation. And nothing is more interesting from the modern point of view than the way in which, in dealing with Homer, he makes "new beauties rise from every line". But of equal interest, too, are his methods of theorising, which mark a return to the observational processes of Aristotle. Thus, avoiding for the most part questions of an abstract or a speculative kind, he limits himself to an intensive study of one particular aspect of style; and by means of an analysis of earlier achievements he presents his theories based on concrete facts and illustrated by the practice of the best Greek masters. In this way he refuses to accept tradition as such, while recognising that to study Attic style in its development was the best means of arriving at its essential qualities. His methods are therefore in the main inductive and historical; and what he submits are general principles, not rules, for he is alive to the fact that there are graces that no methods can teach. Nor, again, are his findings without their interest; for he calls attention to some forgotten truths with regard to style, and his judgments at their best are of permanent value. Never before, if we may judge from the works that have survived, had such stress been laid on the inherent beauty of words, on the artistic possibilities of commonplace words, or on the manifold charms of a skilful setting. The factors of sound thought and lucidity of expression had received due emphasis; but of the added graces of melody and rhythm but little had been said, and Dionysius makes these his main concern. Moreover, in narrowing his field he extends his vision; for the principles he lays down have reference, not to oratory only, but to poetry and prose-writing as well; and they are principles for the most part of universal validity. Apart from this he may also be said to have broken new ground

in his illuminating survey of Attic oratory, and in the just estimates he forms of individual writers, such as Lysias or Thucydides or Demosthenes. In this way he affords a clearer insight into the excellences of Attic prose, and from now on there could be no mistake as to the relative values of Hegesias and Demosthenes as Attic models. Nor must we overlook his views as to the nature and function of criticism, views thrown out at random in his various discussions. In one place he claims the critic's right to discuss freely the work of even the most exalted of writers, and to take account of every quality whether good or bad.¹ In another, he suggests "good taste" as the ultimate criterion of literary value; by which apparently is meant the personal judgment of one trained and refined by familiarity with the great writers.² And for the rest, his views are implicit in his practice; according to which the critic, so far from relying on mere impression, should by analysis give reasons for the faith that is in him.

There are thus many reasons for attaching value to the critical work of Dionysius and for regarding him as a critic of some importance; and this despite the disparagement that his work has encountered in the past. That there is much in his critical output that is conventional and uninspired may be readily conceded. His judgments, for instance, are too frequently the result of a mechanical application of formulae; he is at times pedantic, as when he refuses to recognise Pompeius's argument that men like Plato must be judged by their successes, not their failures.³ In his theorising, too, he is often dry and scholastic; his treatment is apt to suggest that the work of genius is little more than the result of a combination of devices; and he is often over-elaborate or careless in his analyses and discussions. All this and more can be granted; and yet a place in the ranks of the greater critics of antiquity can scarcely be denied him. Compared with Aristotle he may be said to be lacking in originality and depth; he is inferior to Cicero in psychological insight and scope; and he has but little of the inspired and infectious enthusiasm of "Longinus". Neverthe-

¹ *Letter to Pompeius*, I (751-2). ² *Arr. of Words*, c. 12 (p. 132, W. R. R.).

³ *Letter to Pompeius*, II (765).

less his contribution to criticism is by no means negligible, whether we consider his doctrine, much of which is sound and convincing, or his manifold appreciations, which shed a new light on earlier Greek writers. To this work, besides, he brought qualities of unquestioned worth, keen sensibilities, learning, powers of just and accurate observation, as well as aesthetic taste of a catholic kind. Nor was he devoid of flashes of insight; and, while his sensitiveness to the niceties of Greek diction made him almost unique as an exponent of Greek style, in his work may also be found an abundance of new aesthetic terms which constituted for the first time an adequate vocabulary for critical purposes. Then, too, what he taught his contemporaries was a lesson much needed at the time, the importance of discriminating between Attic models and of recapturing something of the lost art of "composition". In this teaching he broke away from the pedantries and formalities of contemporary rhetoricians; and if he did not succeed in eradicating Asiatic tendencies in style, at least he handed on certain principles of value which were applicable to prose-writing in all the ages. Nor can we mistake his position in the succession of ancient critics; for with Horace he shared in the task of recalling Augustan writers to the standards and ideals of classical Greece; and what Horace did for poetry he attempted to accomplish in the sphere of prose style. Thus, like Horace, he insists on the need for imitating the best Attic models, on the need for careful workmanship, for study and practice; in this way enunciating the doctrine of classicism with reference to prose style. As with Horace, however, something was lost in the exposition, concerned as it was with purely formal matters; so that the classicism he advocated was to degenerate later into a body of rigid and mechanical rules. Yet it is as an exponent of the classical tradition that he figures in the history of literary criticism; and to his works modern readers can still turn for reminders of those principles which go to the making of an attractive prose style.

CHAPTER IV

THE LITERARY DECLINE AND CONTEMPORARY COMMENTS: *TRACTATUS COISLINIANUS*, THE TWO SENECAE, PERSIUS, AND PETRONIUS¹

BY the beginning of the Christian era a definite stage in the critical development may be said to have been reached. In the fields of poetry and prose alike declarations had been made on behalf of classicism, according to which the forms and standards of the ancient Greeks were to be adopted along with the spirit of order, restraint, and proportion visible in their works; and in this way something like an absolute aesthetic had been virtually established, a creed for which was claimed something more than a local or temporary validity. The century that followed witnessed a challenge to the newly established doctrine; and in due course it produced no uncertain answer to the challenge. Throughout the first century A.D. Latin literature underwent a serious decline from the high standards of the Augustan period. Inspiration had failed, a multitude of fresh influences had led to a distortion of literary ideals and methods; and in nothing is the decline more evident than in the vices of style which discoloured so much of the literary output. Under these confused conditions it is therefore not strange to find that for the first half of the century criticism was comparatively silent, though comments on the situation were forthcoming from the elder Seneca, Persius, and others. It was not until the

¹ *Texts and Translations.* *Tractatus Coislinianus*, ed. Kaibel in *Comic. Graec. Frag.* (I, 50-3), Berlin, 1899; trans. by Lane Cooper in *An Aristotelian Theory of Comedy*, pp. 224-6, Oxford, 1924. THE ELDER SENECA: *Oratorum et Rhetorum Sententiae* etc. ed. A. Kiessling (Teubner), Leipzig, 1872; *Controversiae et Suasoriae*, ed. H. J. Muller, Leipzig, 1887; ed. M. H. Bornecque, Paris, 1902; *Suasoriae of Seneca*, ed. with trans. by W. A. Edward, Cambridge, 1928. PERSIUS: *Satires*, ed. with trans. by J. Conington, Oxford, 1872; revised by Nettleship, 1874; ed. with trans. by G. G. Ramsay (Loeb Cl. Lib.), London and New York, 1918; trans. by J. Tate, Oxford, 1930. THE YOUNGER SENECA: *Epistulae Morales*, ed. with trans. by R. M. Gummere (Loeb Cl. Lib.), 2 vols., 1920-5. PETRONIUS: *Satyricon*, ed. with trans. by M. Heseltine (Loeb Cl. Lib.), London and New York, 1925; trans. by W. R. Kelley (Bohn Lib.), London, 1854, 1880.

latter half of the century that the new problems which had arisen were seriously faced; and then a fresh body of teaching was presented by Tacitus, Demetrius, "Longinus", and Quintilian, in whose works illuminating re-statements of the classical creed were found, representing in a sense the culmination of the critical activities of antiquity.

Before proceeding, however, with the narrative of the critical development it may be as well at this juncture, despite the risk of digression, to give some account of a work to which it is true no certain date can be given, but which may possibly belong to the first century B.C., thus supplementing the achievements already recorded. The work in question is what is known as the *Tractatus Coislinianus*, a Greek compilation, unique in form and possessed of considerable interest. That it cannot well be earlier than the first century B.C. is the considered opinion of at least one authority;¹ and this, if true, provides a backward limit, though it obviously does not preclude a much later date. At the same time, there is something more to be said for associating it with the first century B.C. There is first its strong Aristotelian colouring, which may well have been due to the renewed study of Aristotle, made possible by the transference of the MSS. of his works to Rome in the course of the century,² and their subsequent treatment at the hands of Tyrannion, Andronicus, and others. Then, too, it is not without its significance that Cicero's remarks on "the ludicrous" have much in common with the treatment of comedy in the *Tractatus*. Such evidence, it is true, is not conclusive, since both treatments may have been based on a common original. Yet neither can the possibility of Cicero's indebtedness be arbitrarily ruled out, nor the consequent allocation of the *Tractatus* to the first century B.C. The evidence as to date is confessedly slight; but it is perhaps sufficient to justify some consideration of the work at this particular stage, as being not altogether an unwarranted proceeding.

Of the *Tractatus* itself but little is known. Preserved in a tenth-century MS. in the De Coislin collection at Paris, it was first published by Cramer in 1839, and has since received from

¹ See J. Kayser, *De Veterum Arte Poetica Quaestiones Selectae*, p. 44.

² See vol. I, 167-8.

scholars less attention than it deserves. An anonymous work due to some Greek epitomator, its material seems to have been drawn from a treatise on poetry, which, clearly post-Aristotelian in kind, was representative of early Peripatetic doctrine not earlier than the first century B.C. In form¹ it is nothing more than a brief abstract or summary of a treatise on poetry, set out in tabular arrangement with divisions and sub-divisions, and with oblique lines and horizontal braces for brevity and clearness; an illustration of the systematising tendencies of Hellenistic methods and thought. Opening with a brief statement on poetry and its kinds (§ 1), it devotes one short paragraph to the subject of tragedy (§ 2), and the remaining sections (§§ 3-10) to a treatment of comedy; so that the work is practically a discussion of comedy, one of the most important treatments of that subject that have come down from antiquity. Significant in the first place is the statement made with regard to poetry, which is said to be either non-imitative or imitative in character; the former consisting of the historical and the educational (i.e. didactic and speculative) kinds, the latter embodying narrative (i.e. the epic) and dramatic (i.e. comedy, tragedy, mime, and satyric drama) kinds. And here at once may be noted certain departures from the Aristotelian tradition, in the conception of certain non-imitative "kinds" of poetry, and again, in the relative importance attached to those several "kinds" and also to comedy (as opposed to tragedy), as implied in the order in which these details are treated. To Aristotle tragedy had been the highest form of art; whereas comedy is here regarded as the representative form. And moreover tragedy is forthwith dismissed with a brief reminder of its function; it is said "to remove the fearful emotions of the soul through pity and fear" (δι' οἴκτου καὶ δέους).

It is, however, in its discussion of comedy that the real interest of the *Tractatus* lies; and it is here that we find many traces of Aristotle's methods and thought, as well as material which (so it is claimed)² had formed part of the lost second

¹ See Lane Cooper, *An Aristotelian Theory of Comedy*, for a full description and for a valuable discussion of the various problems connected with the *Tractatus* to which I am indebted; also Aristotle, *Poetics*, ed. Bywater, Intro. pp. xxi-xxii.

² See Lane Cooper, *op. cit.*

Book of the *Poetics*. Thus the exposition begins with a definition. Comedy is described as "an imitation of an action that is ludicrous, unfortunate (*ἀμείπου*), and of an adequate magnitude [in embellished language], the several kinds of embellishment being separately found in the several parts of the play; presented by persons acting and not in the form of narrative; through pleasure and laughter (*δι' ἡδονῆς καὶ γέλωτος*) effecting the purgation (*κάθαρσις*) of the like emotions".¹ And here the close parallel with Aristotle's definition of tragedy is too obvious to be missed; though the actual relation may be of but a superficial kind, that of an adaptation or an imitation, corresponding actually to nothing in Aristotle's teaching. This at least is suggested by the attempt at defining comedy in terms of its effect, when comedy is said to bring about a catharsis of "pleasure and laughter". A catharsis of laughter or of the excess of laughter is by no means unintelligible; but a catharsis of "pleasure", the specific end of all art, seems scarcely Aristotelian or even good sense. It may be argued that a pleasurable emotional state is a hindrance to man's highest activity, which, according to Aristotle, is the life of contemplation; and that such a state therefore calls for some sort of catharsis. But an explanation of this kind seems somewhat forced; and it is unlikely that the passage throws any fresh light on Aristotle's idea of comedy.

Apart from this, the analysis proceeds on Aristotelian lines, as when for instance the constituent elements (*ὅλη*) of comedy are said to be Plot, Character, Thought, Diction, Song and Spectacle,² or when the quantitative parts, i.e. the structural divisions of comedy, are described as Prologue, Choric Song, Episode, and Exodos.³ As in the *Poetics*, these matters are unequally discussed; and in the first place we note an absence of that emphasis attached by Aristotle to the plot, which is now said to be merely the structure binding together the comic incidents. The characters of comedy on the other hand are more or less defined; they are said to be the buffoon (*βωμολόχος*), the sly or ironical (*εἴρων*) man, and the boaster or impostor,⁴ characters which were common to both earlier and

¹ § 3.² § 7.³ § 9.⁴ § 7.

later comedy. And here may be detected traces of the Aristotelian tradition, for all three types are distinguished in the *Nicomachean Ethics*.¹ There the buffoon is described as a man who exceeds the proper limit in respect of the laughable, his heart being set on raising a laugh at all costs; the boaster, again, as one who pretends to possess qualities which the world esteems though he has them not; while the sly or ironical man is he who disclaims or disparages what qualities he has. For the rest, the various elements are briefly treated, the most interesting comment being on "diction", to the effect that the diction of comedy consists of the common or popular language.² Elsewhere comedy is classified as Old, Middle, and New; and it is in general differentiated from mere abuse, on the ground that "abuse" openly attacks the bad qualities of men, whereas comedy requires what is called *emphasis*,³ a rhetorical term for the use of language in such a way as to imply more than is actually said. The term in all probability is equivalent to the Aristotelian "innuendo" (*ὑπόνοια*); hence the suggestion of the need for "innuendo" in true comedy, and for the employment of ridicule of a good-natured kind.

In addition to all this, the *Tractatus* contains, as its most considerable item, a detailed analysis of the sources of laughter, which, representing as it probably does one of the earliest extant inquiries into the nature of comic effects, obviously calls for close attention. It is stated in the first place that laughter arises either from "diction" or from "the things done".⁴ Comic effects, that is, result in part from the manner of utterance, so that if the words are changed the humorous effect is lost; or again, they may be the outcome of actions or thoughts, in which case the matter apart from the manner affords the amusement. So far the discussion is based on Aristotle's doctrine; for in his *Rhetoric* he had stated that "the causes of laughter must be pleasant, whether people or words or deeds".⁵ And after this, the subject in the *Tractatus* is treated under these two heads, the laughter bound up with diction or expression, and that which is due to things or subject-matter—

¹ iv, xiii, 4 (1127a, 13ff.), tr. Welldon.

² § 8.

³ § 4.

⁴ § 3.

⁵ *Rhet.* i, xi, 29 (1371b, 35). See vol. i, 151.

a treatment found also in Cicero's *De Oratore*. Among the verbal devices mentioned as productive of comic effect is the use of homonyms or ambiguous terms resulting in word-play; or again the use of synonyms that degrade a subject. A yet more fruitful device is that of "garrulity", by which are meant all kinds of disproportionate speech, whether the verbose, the bombastic, or the trivial; and to this is added the use of paronyms consisting of nonce-words and expressions strange to literary speech, of diminutives used to express endearment or contempt, as well as solecisms and blunders of a grammatical kind, all of which on occasion give rise to laughter and are among the recognised means for producing comic effects. As for the humour arising out of subject-matter, this may result from comparisons which are complimentary or degrading, from deceptions, impossibilities and all sorts of surprises, or from actions that are deliberately inconsequent or irrelevant. Distorted characters, again, with defects exaggerated for the sake of effect, these too are laughable in the highest degree; as is also clumsy or clownish dancing, or disjointed narratives incoherent and rambling.

Such then is the attempt made to analyse the comic in this curious and puzzling work; and mechanical and laboured as the attempt may seem, it nevertheless brings to light some of the representative devices of comedy from Aristophanes to Shakespeare.¹ That it fails to exhaust the sources of "the ridiculous" is only what might be expected, while it offers moreover no philosophical explanation of either wit or humour, of all subjects surely among the most elusive. Some general and universal principles are incidentally implied; laughter, which may be excited by words or deeds, is shown to be the outcome of the disproportionate, the deceptive, or the surprising; and it is upon these points that the analysis mainly concentrates. As a contribution to its subject therefore the work has positive value, a value that would have been enhanced by the addition of illustrative examples; though Quintilian was probably right

¹ See W. J. M. Starkie, *Wit and Humour in Shakespeare (A Book of Homage to Shakespeare)*, ed. I. Gollancz, pp. 212ff.), for an interesting article on the *Tractatus*.

when he doubted later on whether an adequate explanation of the comic was ever possible. And for the rest, the *Tractatus* is without doubt in the Aristotelian succession. It is in fact a characteristic Peripatetic production, embodying the sober unimpassioned methods of the master, while devoted mainly to exposition of detail rather than to the philosophical inquiries of the earlier age. A further claim has been made that it contains what is substantially the lost Aristotelian theory of comedy,¹ on the ground that it explains Greek comedy in much the same way as the *Poetics* explains tragedy and the epic. But however this may be, and the question remains unsettled, what is certain is that the work contains traces of Aristotelian doctrine in abbreviated and distorted form, that it embodies also a valuable analysis of the sources of comic effect, while it further illustrates the contamination of Aristotle's theories which had resulted from the temporary loss of the Aristotelian texts, and from the literary developments and theorisings of the Hellenistic period.

Leaving now the consideration of this curious fragment, we take up once again the threads of our narrative, attempting as before to trace the main lines of the critical development. And at no stage of the inquiry is a clear idea of the prevailing conditions more essential than in the century that followed the glorious age of the Augustans. The one outstanding fact is the general deterioration of literature which had become already perceptible in the first half of the century. As against the varied masterpieces of the preceding period practically all that the new age had to offer in the way of literary achievement were the stilted sensational tragedies of the younger Seneca, the epic experiments of Lucan, and the satires of Persius. Great oratory for the most part had by this time ceased; philosophy and to some extent history were the main concerns, and poetry was in the hands of *dilettanti* who wrote of things frivolous in frivolous vein. Nor was the poverty of the output the only ground for complaint; far more serious was the widespread degeneration of style which infected all literature, vitiating all attempts at writing, whether in prose or verse. What was wrong was the

¹ See Lane Cooper, *op. cit.*

ever-present desire to achieve "fine writing", and by the use of some striking phrase, some unexpected turn, to attract attention. For this purpose use was made of various ingenuities, such as ornate metaphors, high-sounding hyperboles, antithesis, paradox, epigram, and even play upon words; and these devices were employed in season and out of season, regardless of their fitness or the harmony of the whole composition. The result was a mode of expression that was strained and artificial, an unreal sort of eloquence in which attempts at novelty became extravagance, and the forceful degenerated into the bombastic. Full of arresting phrases, point, and colour, it was nevertheless a style that was an offence to good taste; and it was everywhere being cultivated, to some extent by Lucan and the younger Seneca, as well as by the poetasters in whom the age abounded.

To account for these phenomena we have but to recall certain aspects of the contemporary conditions; and it is obvious from the first that what we have here is something more than a normal reaction, an ebb-time following the high tide of Augustan art. For the poverty of output the new imperial régime may have been in some measure responsible. The loss of liberty, court influences, the capricious patronage of emperors, and above all, the fading of those national ideals which had fired the Augustans, all these doubtless led to a loss of vision and to a slackening of the inspiration necessary for the creation of great art. Other factors, again, may have contributed to the debasement of style and to the strange lapses of taste on the part of contemporary writers. For one thing, there was in the air a new cosmopolitan spirit which resulted in the introduction to Rome of alien ideals and standards; and of these influences both the younger Seneca and Lucan, being Spanish by origin, would seem to provide examples. Then, too, it must be recognised that at a time when literature had become fashionable and when imitation was the normal procedure, it was inevitable that lack of originality in ideas should lead to preciosity in style, to a search at all costs for the rare, the ingenious, and the novel in expression. At the same time what seems certain is that the cumulative effect of all these influences was after all but slight as compared with the more baneful results of the Roman

system of education, and of the rage for public recitations on the part of poets. It has been usual to ascribe the corruption of contemporary style to rhetorical influences. It would be more correct to attribute it to the false rhetoric then being generated in the schools; and it is here without a doubt that we must look for one of the root causes of the decline of literary taste. Of the nature of Roman education something has already been said. It consisted of instruction in oratory, which had in practice become limited to the exercise of declamation; and it was in the composition of *suasoriae* and *controversiae* for that purpose that false standards were established. In themselves such exercises were not without their possibilities. The *suasoriae*, for instance, were monologues purporting to be delivered by historical personages and voicing the thoughts of each at some great crisis; the *controversiae*, on the other hand, were of the nature of disputes in which the pupils acted as accusers or advocates. And as means to an end, as preliminary exercises for the discussion of political or judicial matters, or for developing the power of expression in words, they had undeniable value. Already, however, they had come to be regarded as ends in themselves. Political and judicial eloquence being no longer in demand, the aim of an oratorical training came to be that of attaining proficiency in scholastic show pieces; and with this object in view the exercises themselves changed vitally in character. Where formerly the themes chosen had been taken from history or contemporary events, now preference was given to subjects of a fictitious kind, and to situations imaginary, improbable, and even absurd. No theme was ruled out provided it promised a thrill, and thus seemed likely to capture an audience. The favourite ingredients were crimes and horrors in which figured heartless tyrants, fearful pirates and the like; and altogether it was a world of melodrama in which declamation thrived, a world with its own laws and sentiments, far removed from reality. And in keeping with all this was the manner that was cultivated. The falseness of the themes was matched by the false glitter of the style, which aimed at an exaggerated utterance that would thrill and startle. Thus a reckless use was made of ornaments of all kinds, including

metaphors, hyperboles, *sententiae*, and conceits; and in place of the dignified Ciceronian phrase a concise jerky style, well flavoured with epigrams, became the fashion. The effects of such methods can in no wise be mistaken, especially when it is recalled that this was the training undergone by all educated Romans at the time. Without a doubt the results are seen in the literature of the period, in that striving for effect, that intoxication with words, which formed so marked a feature of the contemporary style. Nor were these eccentricities by way of being corrected in later life; for apart from the daily declamations of great teachers in the schools, the fashionable public recitations which plagued society conduced to the same results, fostering by their very nature the same excesses. What was needed for success in gatherings of the kind was not so much profound thought or well-constructed poems as a plentiful sprinkling of "purple patches", a striking word, or an ingenious epigram. These were the features that counted in poetry thus declaimed; and they were specially welcome to the idle and servile audiences that were wont to gather. So that over the whole practice there hung an air of unreality and insincerity, which revealed itself in defective and inartistic standards, and thus helped to perpetuate the affected and degenerate style which in the first instance had been the work of the schools.

Such then were the literary conditions that prevailed during the first half of the first century A.D.; and it is with matters arising out of these conditions that criticism at this stage mainly deals, providing in this way an interesting commentary on the situation. Most valuable perhaps is the work of the elder Seneca (c. 54 B.C.—A.D. 39), with whom we re-enter the main stream of the critical development. In his *Specimens of the Roman Orators and Declaimers* (*Oratorum et Rhetorum Sententiae, Divisiones, Colores*),¹ completed probably towards the end of his life, he brings together a number of extracts, along with certain comments, from the speeches of Augustan *rhetores*, with the object of preserving for a later generation some of the more notable utterances of the past. The period with which he thus deals is

¹ See W. A. Edward, *The Suasoriae of Seneca the Elder*, to which I am indebted, and W. C. Summers, *The Silver Age of Latin Literature*, chs. I, XI.

that of the transition between the Ciceronian and the new styles; and for his extracts he relies mainly on his own tenacious memory. Yet his treatment is such that he contrives not only to provide material for a new chapter on the history of Roman oratory, but also to throw light on the influences at work at the time; and in adopting the convention of dedicating the volume to his sons he is enabled to give to his comments a light and personal touch. In its original form the collection consisted of ten Books of *Controversiae* and at least two of *Suasoriae*, each Book being preceded by a preface. Of the work as planned, however, three Books of *Controversiae* (v, vi, viii), together with one Book of *Suasoriae* and the preface of the extant Book, have since been lost; and of the remaining Books of *Controversiae* two have come down in an abridged and a truncated form. As for his methods, Seneca's practice is first to give the theme of the *controversia* or *suasoria*; and then to furnish characteristic utterances of earlier *rhetoires* on those themes, including numerous expressions of a striking and often a pointed kind (*sententiae*). After this he discusses the various treatments and arrangements of the subject-matter (*divisiones*), as well as the nature of the arguments (*colores*) advanced in the *Controversiae* by the prosecution or the defence. And it is in these sections that Seneca's criticism is largely to be found.

Of the various contributions made in this volume to work of a critical kind, none is perhaps more valuable than the light that is thrown upon orators and declaimers of whom otherwise but little or nothing is known. In the course of the work nearly a hundred *rhetoires* of the Augustan age are mentioned; and in not a few instances portraits of the individuals are given, together with appreciations of their styles. And whereas most of such details are supplied by the prefaces, further material is occasionally found in the comments on the *Suasoriae*. Thus it is we learn of what Seneca regarded as the "tetrad"¹ of most famous declaimers, consisting of Porcius Latro, Arellius Fuscus, Albucius Silus and Junius Gallio. Concerning Porcius Latro we gather that he was Seneca's friend, a man of restless energy, with an emotional and unequal style, though gifted above the

¹ *Con.* x, Pref. (13).

average with sobriety of judgment;¹ of Fuscus, again, the instructor of Ovid, that he belonged with his florid and passionate manner to the Asiatic school,² as did also Albucius with his excessive love of Figures;³ whereas Gallio is termed by Seneca a master of the familiar style, though he too betrayed the same weakness for figurative language. Of the rest of the more successful declaimers we catch occasional glimpses, which, valuable in themselves, also help to fill in the picture and illustrate by the way the prevalence of the florid style. There was Volcacijs, for instance, who was charged by his contemporaries with an excessive love of Figures; Nicetes, again, a Greek rhetorician who won distinction in the Asiatic vein; Seneca (Grandio) whose uncontrolled and bombastic flights made of him a laughing-stock;⁴ Cestius Pius, a fashionable and mordant wit, whose conceit was only equalled by his extravagances;⁵ and Haterius, fluent, impassioned, and utterly lacking in restraint, of whom Gallio said that he was filled with divine frenzy.⁶ Of these and many others Seneca supplies interesting excerpts, for he illustrates their strength as well as their weaknesses; and incidentally we gather some idea of the mixed origin of the declaimers, some hailing from Spain, others from Asia Minor, while a few of them declaimed only in Greek.

Of equal interest, however, is the information that is supplied with regard to the declamations themselves; their status, their qualities, and Seneca's opinions on these and other kindred topics. Already it is clear that more than one protest had been raised against the practice of declaiming. Votienus Montanus, for instance, had called attention to its artificiality and ostentation in no uncertain terms. "In declamation", he stated,⁷ "men speak to please and not to persuade; ornaments are sought for, while argument is dispensed with as being troublesome and uninteresting; it is sufficient to please by means of *sententiae* and amplifications, the aim being that of personal triumph rather than the triumph of a cause." And similar contempt was expressed by Cassius Severus, a successful ad-

¹ *Con.* i, Pref. (13).

⁴ *Suas.* ii, 17.

⁶ *Suas.* iii, 7.

² *Suas.* ii, 10.

⁵ *Con.* vii, Pref. (8); *Suas.* vii, 12.

⁷ *Con.* ix, Pref. (1).

³ *Con.* vii, Pref. 6-7.

vocate of his day, who emphasised its triviality and its worthlessness as a training for practical life. His contention was that the eloquence of the schools and of the law-courts were two different things; and that declaimers failed in serious oratory. When declaiming he confessed that he seemed to be working in a dream; and in general he maintained that orators were no more needed for such puerile exercises than were "pilots in a fish-pond".¹ And with these views Seneca is in substantial agreement, his attitude throughout suggesting that declamation was after all not a serious thing. To him the really serious activities were history and oratory; and towards the end he apologises for having played so long with trifles.²

Then, too, concerning the actual nature of the declamations a shrewd idea may be formed, and more especially of the subjects usually chosen for treatment. And what has already been said regarding their fanciful and far-fetched character is amply illustrated by Seneca's collection. Thus in the *Suasoriae* we have Agamemnon deliberating whether he should sacrifice his daughter,³ or Cicero, again, meditating whether he should apologise to Antony to save his life;⁴ whereas in the *Controversiae* are found such problems as whether a man is justly disinherited for marrying a pirate's daughter to whom he owes his freedom,⁵ or whether a supposedly guilty vestal virgin, who had miraculously escaped after being flung over a precipice, was still liable to punishment.⁶ These were instances of the remote and melodramatic situations sought after for the purposes of declamation; and it is significant that from Seneca's volume were taken not a few of the tales that appeared later in the *Gesta Romanorum*.⁷ Nor are illustrations wanting of the styles characteristic of this type of work; for in spite of individual differences on the part of the various declaimers, the same general features may be traced throughout. There are passages for example that are marked with both dignity and grace, in which splendid diction effectively used gives rise to utterances that belong to the realm of oratory; and of these the speeches on Cicero's death and

¹ *Con.* III, Pref. (14).

² *Ibid.* x, Pref. (1).

³ *Suas.* III.

⁴ *Ibid.* VII.

⁵ *Con.* I, 6.

⁶ *Ibid.* 3.

⁷ L. Friedländer, *Roman Life and Manners*, IV, 297.

the appreciations of his character¹ are perhaps the most notable instances. At the same time elsewhere there is often present a straining for effect, which at best produces but artificial results, and at worst degenerates into sheer absurdity. Thus not infrequently are to be found instances of bad taste or jerky rhythm, of the forced use of antithesis, hyperbole, rhetorical questions and the rest. All features alike are reproduced by Seneca, his object being to preserve the main qualities of the declaimers. And he submits them for the most part without discrimination, while inviting his readers to form their own judgments.

So far we have been considering Seneca's work as a critic mainly in the light of the information he supplies with regard to declamations and declaimers, and their bearing on the causes of the literary decline. At the same time he has further claims to a place in critical history on account of work of a more specifically critical kind. Of his appreciations of the leading declaimers in his Prefaces, his choice of striking passages (*sententiae*), his discussions of arguments (*colores*) and their arrangements (*divisiones*), mention has already been made; and in all this was clearly involved an exercise of the critical faculties. But apart from this his work contains scattered pronouncements and judgments on literature, which, though casually thrown out, are generally of a sane and suggestive character. His object in recording his memories, he explains,² was to show what eloquence there was in Rome to set against "insolent Greece" (*insolenti Graeciae*); and his finding was that all the great work had been done in Cicero's time, since when things day by day had deteriorated. In fact, Cicero was the only Roman he would place alongside the greatest of the Greeks; "his was the only genius which the Roman people possessed in keeping with their national greatness" (*ingenium par imperio*);³ though elsewhere he suggests that Sallust was comparable with Thucydides, while Virgil's position, he asserts, was so assured as to need no mention.⁴ And concerning the subsequent decline he has also something to say. He notes how of late slothfulness and dishonesty had invaded society, so that men were content

¹ *Suas.* vi.² *Con.* i, Pref. (6).³ *Ibid.* (11).⁴ *Ibid.* ix, 1, 13.

slavishly to follow the declaimers, even attempting to pass off borrowed material as their own; and all this he attributes to a decay in moral fibre, brought about by increased luxury in the national life.¹ Then, too, though usually he presents his material without remarking on style, occasionally he makes it clear by some passing comment that he was alive to the defects as well as the merits of the earlier declaimers. Thus he ridicules the bombastic manner of Glyco, who at the end of a stirring passage ruined the effect by the superfluous addition of "Farewell O earth, Farewell O sun!; the Macedonians are rushing into Chaos".² Or again, there was the affectation and extravagance of Seneca (Grandio), who, on one occasion, a-tiptoe and with extended hands, exclaimed: "I rejoice, I rejoice", adding subsequently and inadequately that "Xerxes will be wholly mine".³ And to the same declaimer was attributed as yet another example of inflation the passage: "He (Xerxes) has appropriated the seas with his fleet, he has circumscribed the lands, he has extended the deep and commanded Nature herself to change her appearance; let him lay siege to heaven, I have the gods as my comrades".⁴ Similar occasional comments are, however, scattered through his work; and in one instance he shows how the defect in question could best be remedied. He is calling attention to the absurdity of Cestius's exclamation to Alexander: "The Ocean roars as if in anger at your leaving dry land";⁵ and by way of contrast he recalls Virgil's method of describing the confusion of the ships at Actium, when he states that "it seemed as if the Cyclades were torn up and floating in the sea" (*Aen.* viii, 691). There, Seneca points out, the effect of greatness is obtained without falling into turgidity; and this was done by saying, not that the prodigy happened, but that it merely seemed to happen.

Nor must we overlook his casual remarks on art, or the suggestions he from time to time throws out relating to the problems of his age. In one place, for instance, he explains that bad writing was often the result of a debased contemporary

¹ *Con.* i, 7.² *Suas.* i, 16.³ *Ibid.* ii, 17.⁴ *Ibid.*⁵ *Ibid.* i, 11.

taste; and he laments the liking shown by the youth of the day for Cestius as opposed to the earlier orators.¹ They would even have preferred him to Cicero had they dared, he added; and while they committed to memory all the declamations of Cestius, they learnt only those speeches of Cicero to which Cestius had replied. And equally interesting are his rare remarks on style, a subject obviously to which he had given much attention. He commends for example the orthodox doctrines of *studium* and *imitatio*, but in a fresh and attractive manner. It is good, he maintains, to study the oratory not only of the present but also of former times; for the more a writer familiarises himself with models the better for his style. At the same time no one writer, however excellent, was to be imitated solely and entirely. A mere imitator, he points out, is never equal to his original; since by the very nature of things a likeness must always to some extent fall short of the truth.² Then, too, of the highest significance in the light of the prevailing tendencies are his remarks on the use of devices for heightening the style. In this matter he approves of the views of Porcius Latro who had held that Figures of speech were invented, not for ornament, but as an aid to expression, and for uttering obliquely that which would offend if plainly expressed. So that he considered it madness to distort plain speaking (or writing) by means of unnecessary Figures.³ On the other hand, where such devices are used Seneca demands a careful concealment of art; and here once again he is approving of Porcius Latro, and this time of his practice. Thus he reminds his readers that in the views of many there is no ingenuity (*subtilitas*) of style except where everything is ingenious; and such a view he regards as harmful in the highest degree. In the work of Porcius Latro, he asserts, artistic devices are found, and they are devices that serve particular purposes. But they are by no means obvious; as with ambushes, they are effective just because they are hidden. And Seneca had surely in mind the stylistic needs of his time when to this he added that "perhaps the greatest vice of ingenuity is to be too apparent".⁴

¹ *Con.* III, Pref. (15).

³ *Ibid.* (23-4).

² *Ibid.* I, Pref. (6).

⁴ *Ibid.* (21, 23).

These then are the main features of Seneca's contribution to criticism; and his *Specimens*, in which that criticism is embodied, is without doubt a work of capital importance, one of the representative works in the critical development. In the first place, to an age that had surrendered to false ideals in style it came as a reminder of the standards of the past, a warning also of the dangers of the declamations then in vogue. Apparently little more than a record of past achievements in oratory, including much that is good and not a little that is bad, it is nevertheless a work the main tendencies of which can scarcely be mistaken, especially in the light of the running commentary it contains. For in his remarks, as we have seen, Seneca deals faithfully with earlier traces of bad taste, at the same time commending Cicero as the model of style for Romans. So that it is as the first tentative effort on behalf of Cicero and the classical school that the work really figures in the new century. Over and above this, however, its historical interest will be found to be equally great, whether we consider the gap it fills in literary history, the light it throws on the literary decline, or the idea it incidentally affords of Roman education in practice. Then too there is the place it occupies in the critical development. In an uncritical age it tended to keep alive the qualities of simplicity and good sense in style; and as such it represents a link between the activities of Cicero and those of the later half of the first century A.D., in which a re-statement of classical doctrine was to be made. As for the work itself, it reflects in admirable fashion certain qualities of its author, his hatred of bombast and all that was meretricious in style; while it also reveals in him a keen critic of men and things. Its form as an anthology was somewhat rare in antiquity; but it has the merit of bringing us close to the actual literature of the time. And if, as is the way with *Specimens*, the data are not always sufficient for the formation of final estimates, yet of more than one of the leading declaimers a shrewd idea can be formed.

Nor must we forget the peculiar interest of the work for English readers; how in the matter of form it anticipates the nineteenth-century *Specimens* of Lamb and others, while at the

Renascence it gave colour to certain memorable judgments. Few things in critical history are indeed more remarkable than the use made of this volume of Seneca by Ben Jonson in his *Discoveries*, a work long thought to be an original composition, but now recognised as a cento of quotations taken mostly from writers of the Silver Age at Rome.¹ Among the borrowings are a dozen or so from Seneca's *Controversiae* (and mainly from the Prefaces), which are modified and adapted to serve Jonson's immediate purposes; and while most of the passages in question are concerned with points of doctrine, in two places at least appreciations of Augustan *rhetoires* are transferred bodily to Elizabethan writers. And this is done with a happiness and skill that make of them striking utterances, at the same time giving to them the appearance of direct impression. Thus Jonson's famous appreciation of Shakespeare is none other than a re-working of Seneca's remarks on the verbose and impassioned Haterius, of whom Augustus on one occasion patronisingly remarked (as Seneca and Jonson record), "Our friend Haterius must be checked" (*Haterius noster sufflaminandus est*). And this is seen in the rest of the familiar passage on Shakespeare² which runs as follows: "(He had) brave notions and gentle expressions; wherein hee flow'd with that facility that sometime it was necessary he should be stop'd.... His wit was in his owne power; would the rule of it had beene so too. Many times hee fell into those things could not escape laughter.... But hee redeemed his vices with his vertues. There was ever more in him to be praysed then to be pardoned"; all of which follows closely, and in places literally, the words of Seneca.³ And a similar process is seen at work in Jonson's eulogy on Bacon, to whom is applied Seneca's estimate of Cassius Severus in all its details. Thus of Bacon, Jonson says: "(He) was full of gravity in his speaking. His language (where

¹ See Jonson, *Discoveries*, ed. M. Castelain, 1906.

² *Discoveries*, § 64.

³ Nec verborum illi tantum copia sed etiam rerum erat...ita ut nec consumi posset nec regi....Tanta erat illi velocitas orationis ut vitium fieret....In sua potestate habebat ingenium, in aliena modum...sacpe incidebat in ea quae derisum effugere non possent....Multa erant quae reprehenderes....Redimebat tamen vitia virtutibus et plus habebat quod laudares quam cui ignosceres. (*Con. iv*, Pref. 7-11.)

hee could spare or passe by a jest) was nobly censorious. No man ever spake more neatly, more presly, more weightily, or suffer'd lesse emptinesse, lesse idlenesse, in what hee utter'd. No member of his speech but consisted of his owne graces. His hearers could not cough or looke aside from him without losse. Hee commanded where hee spoke....No man had their affections more in his power. The feare of every man that heard him was lest hee should make an end";¹ and here again a comparison with the Senecan text² makes the borrowing obvious. So that of Jonson's appreciation of Seneca's writings there can be no doubt; and in view of its many-sided interest, its intrinsic and historical value, it is all the more surprising that the *Controversiae*, and more especially the Prefaces, should still remain inaccessible to the general reader in English.

With the elder Seneca, then, as we have seen, began the main critical activities of the first century A.D.; and in this field he was followed by the poet Persius (34-62 A.D.), whose work likewise contained some amount of commentary on contemporary literature, though from a different angle. While not wholly devoid of that pious regard for the past which had animated the work of Seneca, the *Satires* of Persius embody rather the enthusiastic downrightness of a young and outspoken poet, who, in waging war against the moral evils of his time, attacks indirectly the defects of contemporary literature, and has moreover in mind, not so much the decline in oratory, as the evils that were rampant in the poetic circles of his day. It is thus with poetry that he almost exclusively deals where literature is concerned; and for the substance of his criticism we must turn first to the *Prologue*, where a few withering remarks on certain recognised poetic conventions set the tone for what was to follow. Then in *Satire* I he deals at length with the corruption of poetry, employing for this purpose a dialogue

¹ *Discoveries*, § 71.

² Nec enim quicquam magis in illo mirareris, quam quod gravitas... actioni supererat; quamdiu citra iocos se continebat, censoria oratio erat. ...Oratio eius erat valens, culta, ingentibus plena sententiis; nemo minus passus est aliquid in actione sua otiosi esse; nulla pars erat, quae non sua virtute staret, nihil in quo auditor sine damno aliud ageret... nemo magis in sua potestate habuit audientium affectus... adeo omnes imperata faciebant... Nemo non illo dicente timebat ne desineret. (*Con.* III, Pref. 2, 4.)

form in which he and a friend appear as interlocutors. And it is here that he draws up his main indictment, though references to literary topics occur again at the beginnings of *Satires* v and vi.

Of the nature of his criticism this much may at once be said, that it is almost entirely destructive in kind, though this indeed follows from the object he had in view, namely, the correction of prevailing abuses. And significant of his attitude throughout are his opening words¹ in which he contemptuously disclaims the conventional "inspiration" of a poet, which was said to result from draughts of Hippocrene on Mount Helicon, or from having dreamed on the heights of Mount Parnassus. Such claims of becoming a poet ready-made² through the agency of the gods he dismisses as mere fancy and presumption, insisting that want or love of gain not infrequently supplied the poetic incentive. And here no doubt he is deriding one of the cant expressions of his time, that "inspiration" which was often the excuse for wild and impassioned utterance, as when Gallio proclaimed of Haterius that he was "filled with divine frenzy".³ With this in mind he then proceeds to depict the artifice and methods of the tribe of poets, their laboured preparation in private, their ostentatious and calculated display in public. And two unforgettable pictures of the public recitations and symposia are the result. To the one, we are told, the poet goes faultlessly dressed and adorned with jewellery, and after gargling his throat he proceeds to mouth his verses, with much rolling of eyes, to the apparent delight of an enthralled and appreciative audience.⁴ Or again, it might be a symposium at which the poet shone; and there in response to the clamour of well-feasted Romans he would appear in a hyacinthine garment, mincing and lisping his words as he told the flimsy tales of the Phyllises, the Hypsipyles, and the rest of the vapid heroines of the mythological world.⁵ What Persius does here is to condemn primarily the posturings and affectations of the poets, as well

¹ *Prol.* 1 ff.

² Cf. B. Jonson, *Discoveries*, § 130, for a reminiscence of this passage.

³ Seneca, *Suas.* III, 7.

⁴ *Sat.* I, 13-22.

⁵ *Ibid.* 30-6; see H. J. Rose, *Class. Rev.* (38) 1924, p. 63 for the significance of Phyllises, Hypsipyles, etc.

as their acceptance of popular applause as evidence of merit. Thus he protests vigorously against measuring excellence by fashionable standards; your "bravo!" (*euge*) and your "fine!" (*belle*), he points out, are not final judgments. For such applause was often the result of judiciously bestowed patronage, of the gift of a welcome dinner or a cast-off cloak; and such poets were spared from ever hearing the truth.¹

After this he attacks some of the more glaring abuses inherent in the poets themselves, such as the inadequacy and the confusion of their standards. Provided for instance that smoothness or "correctness" in verse was attained, or if perchance they could achieve what in their jargon they termed the "grand" style, they were said for the most part to be content with their art and confident of winning popular applause.² Moreover this "grand" style, we are told, they would employ in dealing with all sorts of subjects, with satirical as well as heroic themes; and in addition, such epics were being attempted by mere dabblers in poetry, men incapable of giving artistic form to the simplest of poems. Better than all this, it is suggested, were those earlier strains in which had been sung the artless charms of rustic life, or the simple stories of Remus and Cincinnatus. And if in reply it was urged that the imitation of old poets had disastrous results, including a hodge-podge of language productive of the most discordant effects, to that Persius would retort that such results were largely the outcome of pedantic teaching, which dwelt only on what was turgid in Accius and Pacuvius.³ Equally serious, however, was said to be the prevailing bad taste which revealed itself in the affectation of fine writing common to all men of letters; and in two of his rare references to the practice of oratory Persius alludes to the unseemly artifices then in vogue. In one place, for instance, he recalls his distaste for a bombastic declamation (*verba grandia*) which he had learnt as a boy, a grandiose speech purporting to be the dying utterance of Cato.⁴ And in another he points out how eloquence in general had become tainted with the disease; so

¹ *Sat.* i, 44-62.

² *Ibid.* 63-8.

³ *Ibid.* 69-82; for this interpretation of the passage see H. J. Rose, *Class. Rev.* (38) 1924, p. 64; also J. Tate, *Translation of Persius*, p. 62, n.

⁴ *Sat.* iii, 45.

that advocates in the law-courts, in replying to capital charges, were more concerned to win applause by neat antitheses (*rasis antithetis*) and artful tropes (*doctas figuras*) than to establish by argument the innocence of the accused.¹ Nor with regard to poetry were things any better; there was everywhere apparent the same affectation and insincerity in expression. Thus even Horace's ship-wrecked sailor, he asserts,² would appeal for sympathy by singing a song, regardless of the fact that men are moved not by artifice but by appeals that come direct from the heart. And so it was with the devices of contemporary poetasters who looked primarily to cunning rhythms and far-fetched turns for their main effects. Hence such grotesque phrases as "the dolphin was cutting through sea-green Nereus",³ or again, "We have fetched off a rib from the long sides of Appenninus".³ To these he adds certain lines commonly attributed to Nero: "Their grim horns they filled with Mimallonean boomings, . . . the Bassarid, ready to tear the scornful calf's head from his shoulders, and the Maenad, ready to rein in the lynx with ivy branches, shout Evios again and again, and the redeeming power of Echo chimes in";⁴ and with a brief but significant appeal to the shades of Virgil, he condemns such utterances as mere froth and drivel.

These then are the main charges brought against contemporary poets and poetry by Persius; and they lose nothing of their effect from his way of presenting them. The realism of his pictures and his use of illustrative examples have already been noted; but he reinforces his attack by yet other means which give voice to his scorn in subtle fashion. In the *Prologue*, for instance, he ridicules by imitation the conceited style he is decrying, and speaks of a poet "drenching his lips in the hack's spring (*fonte caballino*)", or of "dreaming on the two-headed Parnassus (*bicipiti Parnaso*)".⁵ Or again, there is his travesty of the turgid archaic style of Pacuvius at his worst, when he refers to Antiope whose "dolorific heart is stayed on tribulation (*aerumnis cor luctificabile fulta*)".⁶ And the same scorn finds

¹ *Sat.* 1, 83-7.² *Ibid.* 86-91.³ *Ibid.* 94-5 (tr. Conington).⁴ *Ibid.* 99-102 (tr. Conington).⁵ *Prolog.* 1 and 2; cf. also v, 7.⁶ *Sat.* 1, 78 (tr. Conington).

further expression in his own crabbed but forceful style, with its startling colloquialisms and strange metaphors, and its obscurity due to brevity and a lack of transitions. Of constructive criticism, however, his work has but few traces. He notes with approval the performance of his friend Bassus, who had dealt with serious and national themes in worthy fashion;¹ and his own ideals are represented in a speech by Cornutus, who credits him with attacking the evils of his day by means of a skilful use of the language of ordinary life.² It may further be urged that as his standards of satire he sets up the Old Comedy of Greece, the direct and outspoken works of Cratinus, Eupolis, and Aristophanes.³ It was thus, he recalls, that Lucilius and Horace had written; the former had "bitten deep" into the society of his day, whereas Horace, "the rogue", had probed all weaknesses (*omne vafer vitium*), while making his friends laugh.⁴ But though Persius may thus be said to stand for reality and sound sense in poetry, there is but little else besides of a positive character in his teaching. As has already been said, his interests lay primarily in moral and social abuses; with literary abuses he was concerned only in so far as they were symptomatic of social disorders of a more deeply rooted kind. Then, too, he was apparently lacking in artistic feeling; the disregard for the cult of form shown throughout his work is sufficient evidence of this. So that it is not surprising to find that he is not concerned with literary theory, or with positive injunctions for the improvement of contemporary art. On the other hand, unsparing censure of the "Labeos" and the "jack-daw poets" of his day is his main objective. He pleads for manliness in style and for a treatment of the things that really matter; and it is therefore as a crusader in the cause of sincerity that he may be said to play his part in contemporary criticism.

Of a somewhat different kind is the contribution of Petronius Arbiter (d. A.D. 66) to critical work. It consists of three passages in that remarkable work of his, *Saturae* or *Satyricon* (as it is more generally known), which represents the first novel extant of a picaresque kind. In form it is a *satura Menippea*, written in prose interspersed with occasional verse; and its rambling narrative

¹ *Sat.* vi, 1-6.² *Ibid.* v, 14ff.³ *Ibid.* i, 123-5.⁴ *Ibid.* 114-16.

consists of the adventures of a Greek freedman in the sea-ports of southern Italy, in the course of which the reader is presented with a devastating picture of much that was indecent, depraved, and vulgar in the contemporary underworld. As a realistic picture of the life of the times it has unique and lasting value, the description of the supper of Trimalchio being perhaps the most masterly piece of fooling; and as the production of one who was a sort of Master of the Ceremonies (*Arbiter Elegantiarum*) at the court of Nero, it is by no means incongruous. At the same time the work without doubt has also artistic value, while the interest of the writer in literary questions is betrayed amidst all the rough-and-tumble; and for this, if for no other reason, it is an occasion for regret that of the original composition only parts of two Books (xv and xvi) have survived.

The first of the critical passages occurs at the beginning of the work and is a forcibly expressed comment on the hapless condition of oratory and literature generally, arising out of a conversation between Encolpius, the "hero" of the story, and Agamemnon a rhetorician. Encolpius opens by attacking the practice of declamation in the schools, which he regards as the root of the evil. There, he complains, youth is occupied with matters remote from actual life. They treat of pirates standing on the shore with chains in their hands (*piratas cum catenis in litore stantes*),¹ of tyrants issuing decrees to make children slay their fathers, of oracles uttered in times of plague for human sacrifices to appease the gods; and these things they handle with the utmost artifice, with honeyed phrases and words well spiced. No wonder, he adds, that youths so trained seem foolish and bewildered in public life; indeed for young men of this kind "good taste (*sapere*) is as impossible as a fragrant smell (*bene olere*) for those who live in the kitchen".² Whereupon the attack is then directed against the rhetoricians themselves, as being ultimately the cause of the ruin of eloquence. For in exciting ridicule by their light and frivolous style, they are said to have weakened and degraded the whole body of oratory. Moreover, among the Greeks, it is pointed out, things had been different. In the days of Sophocles and Pindar, youth

¹ *Satyricon*, § 1.

² *Ibid.* § 2.

had not felt the shackles of the declamation, while the pedantry of the academic teacher (*umbraticus doctor*) had not as yet spoilt good wits; nor again had Plato or Demosthenes to submit to this form of discipline. The fact was, as Encolpius added, that oratory mature and unspoiled was neither patchy nor inflated; it sprang forth from the soil with a native beauty of its own. And finally he arraigns the unwholesome influence of the Asiatics with their windy and lawless manner, which had latterly affected youth like some pestilential star; so that eloquence, become corrupt, had at length been reduced to silence. Who since then, he asks, had rivalled Thucydides or Hyperides? There was indeed not so much as an ingenious poem to show; all literature, as if tainted with the same poison, had passed with the age that had produced it. To this indictment Agamemnon at length replies;¹ but all he has to urge is that the evil plight of letters was due to the ill-judged haste of parents who hurried their sons into public life before they were ripe, and before the schools had time to complete their work. The weight of the argument, it must be confessed, plainly rests with Encolpius, who is here obviously the mouthpiece of Petronius. Indeed his analysis of the causes of the prevailing evils is singularly acute and just; and significant also in its relation to Augustan theorising is his reference to Hyperides and Thucydides as standards of style.

Of less importance, perhaps, but not without its interest is the passage which treats of the decline of the sister arts, and of the causes to which the decline was due.² Encolpius in his wanderings has strayed into a picture gallery, where he finds much to admire in the masterpieces of Zeuxis, Apelles and others. And while musing on their art and the fables they had depicted, he is accosted by Eumolpus, an old Bohemian poet, to whom he addresses certain questions concerning the pictures themselves and the reasons for the loss of mastery in their own age. Eumolpus's explanation is that the love of wealth was the root cause of the trouble; for in earlier times, he asserts, when virtue was prized, all the liberal arts flourished, and men strove with one another in creating and inventing things that would

¹ *Satyricon*, § 3.² *Ibid.* § 88.

profit mankind. His own age, on the other hand, he describes as given over to loose living, so that no efforts were made to study even the existing arts. The business of the schools was, in short, to decry the ancients, to learn and impart vices; and the results were seen in all fields of study, in the intellectual and the religious spheres alike. There was therefore no wonder that painting was a lost art, added Eumolpus, seeing that a nugget of gold appeared more beautiful, both to men and gods, than anything that Apelles or Phidias, those poor crazy Greeks, had ever done. And there is no reason for doubting that in this explanation of Eumolpus, Petronius is submitting his own views on the plastic arts and on literature as well.

The most striking of his utterances is, however, found in the remaining passage which consists of a pronouncement on poetry and on the epic in particular;¹ and the statement is one of considerable interest, both in its relation to contemporary art and on account of the influence it exercised on later critical thought. The exposition once again is put into the mouth of the old poet Eumolpus, who proceeds to discuss with his young companions some of the perverse ideas current with regard to poetry. And first he deals with mistaken conceptions as to the nature of poetry. There are those, he states, who, skilled in versifying and in giving to feeble matter figurative expression, deem themselves in consequence to be poets inspired. Others again there are, learned and experienced advocates, who turn to poetry as to some happy haven, believing it to be easier to write a poem than to compose a *controversia* with its rapid fire of epigrams. Yet nobler souls, adds Eumolpus, are not satisfied with mere empty words; nor is the mind of man able to create unless fertilised with much reading. Having thus affirmed the lofty claims of poetry, Eumolpus turns to faults in the poetic art as practised, and sets out a few guiding principles in point of method. Thus in poetry, he urges, all mean expressions must be avoided; choice words should be used, words free from all vulgarity. And in addition there must be no "purple patches"; striking phrases (*sententiae*) should not stand out from the rest of the poem, but should be woven into its texture and form

¹ *Satyricon*, § 118.

part of its beauty as a whole. And in support of this doctrine reference is made to the practice of Homer and Virgil, and to the *curiosa felicitas* of Horace, that exquisite finish of his art rivalling nature in its freshness. After this the discourse is confined to a consideration of the epic; and having reminded his hearers of the magnitude of a great epic—such as one for instance on the Civil Wars at Rome—Eumolpus proceeds to touch briefly on certain points of epic theory in a passage that calls for some detailed treatment. Thus “public events”, he states,¹ “are not to be related in verse-form; for the historians perform that task more effectively than poets. On the contrary, the poetic spirit, freed from the trammels of fact, must be urged forward in oblique and indirect fashion, with the gods intervening and with invention on the rack for poetic ornament; so that the result may seem the prophetic utterance of a soul aflame, rather than a scrupulous statement of fact testified to by witnesses”. And here in this brief but puzzling extract is one of the most suggestive utterances on poetry made by Roman critics.

That the passage in the first place embodies a covert comment on contemporary poetry is generally conceded. Without a doubt we have here an echo of the controversy excited by Lucan's *Pharsalia*, that epic on the Civil Wars at Rome which had so far broken away from the epic tradition as to dispense entirely with the Homeric machinery. In Virgil's *Aeneid* the Olympian gods were still active, aiding and hindering the fortunes of Aeneas; but by Lucan they were ignored with a completeness that raised the whole question. And the particular reference to the theme of the *Pharsalia* with which the passage opens is a sufficient indication of the bearing of the theorising that follows. What Eumolpus therefore objects to in Lucan's poem is partly its historical subject, which, as the context makes clear, he regards as material too stubborn for the free handling of the poet, and for which he deems the methods of the historians

¹ Non enim res gestae versibus comprehendendae sunt, quod longe melius historici faciunt, sed per ambages decorumque ministeria et fabulosum sententiarum tormentum praecipitandus est liber spiritus, ut potius furentis animi vaticinatio appareat quam religiosae orationis sub testibus fides. (*Saturnion*, § 118.)

to be far better suited. But over and above this there is Lucan's disregard of the resources of divine intervention, the *deorum ministeria* prescribed by epic tradition, possibly on account of the recent character of the history with which he dealt. And it is as an advocate of the Virgilian school that Eumolpus puts forward his theory, insisting on the need for the marvellous and the mythical in the epic. Nor need we scruple to accept Eumolpus's views as those of Petronius himself; though reasons have been urged for regarding the passage as mere burlesque, and indirectly a defence of the innovations of Lucan by way of an attack on the orthodox school. Thus it has been argued that Petronius, the daring and unconventional innovator, was not one who would be expected to defend the established tradition in poetry. Nor again, it is suggested, would Petronius have seriously chosen for the expression of his ideas such a character as the disreputable and ridiculous Eumolpus. And as for the evidence of the epic fragment that follows in the text, this has been held by reason of its worthlessness to give further support to the theory of a burlesque intention. But such arguments, though plausible, can hardly be regarded as final and conclusive. What seems certain is that Eumolpus's previous utterance on the decline of the fine arts was intended to be taken seriously; and it is also significant that Eumolpus, despite his contemptible appearance and behaviour, somehow managed to convey to Encolpius the impression of possessing hidden depths in his character.¹ Moreover, opinions differ as to the value of the epic fragment. By not a few scholars the verses have been taken seriously, and have been accepted as a useful illustration of the epic theory previously expounded. So that altogether it would seem that Eumolpus is here once again the mouthpiece of Petronius; that the passage in question is best regarded as a serious pronouncement on the part of its author; and that Petronius is here attacking Lucan on two scores, his choice of an historical subject and his omission of the traditional epic machinery.

But while these are the more obvious points made by Petronius in his theorising, equally interesting, and indeed in some ways more interesting, is the conception of the poetic

¹ Cf. *Satyricon*, § 83, 7: *qui videretur nescio quid magnum promittere*.

activity he puts forward in this passage. For what he demands in the poet is a "fine frenzy", the powerful workings of a free (*liber*) impassioned spirit, the prophetic utterance of a soul aflame (*furentis animi vaticinatio*); and in this way he claims for poetry a place in the sphere of the imagination. Hence he postulates a release from the world of fact. The poet, working obliquely and by suggestions and hints (*per ambages*) rather than by direct statements, is required to rise above the commonplace and the prosaic by virtue of his Olympian background (*deorumque ministeria*), as well as by that heightening of his style (*fabulosum sententiarum tormentum*) for which his spirit agonises. He is, in other words, to take the kingdom of poetry by storm, like Aristotle's "enthusiastic" (*μανικός*) poet; and it is to be noted that all the terms employed are those of impassioned effort (*praecipitandus, tormentum, furentis*). The passage is thus a reminder of the part played in the poetic process by imagination and passion; and despite its brevity and obscurity in places, it bears eloquent testimony to the critical insight of Petronius, just as does his familiar two-word criticism of Horace, perhaps the most pregnant, and certainly one of the happiest, appreciations in all critical history.

Such then is the nature of the critical achievement of Petronius as preserved in that strangest and most unlikely of forms, a rogue-novel. Strictly limited in amount, it yet attains at its best the highest quality; and it was destined to exercise considerable influence in later ages. Of its actual influence at Rome it is difficult to speak; though Lucan in his innovations had no successors, Silius Italicus, Valerius Flaccus, and Statius all alike returning to the Virgilian epic tradition commended by Petronius. To critics of the seventeenth century, both in England and France, however, his work was familiar, as is shown by the frequency with which it is recalled. The passage on the epic, for instance, is the stock quotation of almost every writer on the heroic poem; it is found in the works of Rapin, Bossu, and St Evremond, while Dryden not only reproduces the extract in full,¹ but refers more than once elsewhere to the ideas of Petronius. For the most part, however, the critical interest in

¹ Ker, *Essays of Dryden*, I, 152 (*Essay of Heroic Plays*).

this passage was confined to its pronouncement on epic machinery, for which it became the recognised apology; and it was left for a later age to bring out the larger meaning of the statement. Pope, indeed, in his *Essay on Criticism*¹ ranked Petronius with "Longinus" and Quintilian; though Dr Johnson in his downright fashion suspects that he had never actually read Petronius. He suggests that Pope had "mentioned him on the credit of two or three sentences which he had often seen quoted, imagining that where there was so much there must necessarily be more. Young men in haste to be renowned (adds Johnson) too frequently talk of books which they have scarcely seen".² It was Coleridge who first realised the full significance of the passage, and more particularly of the phrase *praecipitandus est liber spiritus*, in its bearing on the imaginative process of the poet. He points out how effectively the epithet *liber* balances the preceding verb *faciunt* (the prosaic process of the historian); and "it is not easy", he adds, "to conceive more meaning condensed in fewer words".³

In the works of the elder Seneca, Persius, and Petronius will thus be found what is perhaps most significant, and certainly most interesting historically, in the criticism of the earlier part of the first century A.D. Each in his different way was concerned with one or other of the main issues, and all alike bore directly on contemporary literary conditions and problems. Less direct in its bearing, though not without its importance, was the contribution of the younger Seneca (A.D. 4-65), who, as the most eloquent and influential of the men of letters, was one of the outstanding figures of his time. At no stage of his career, however, can his interests be said to have been predominantly literary. Matters political, scientific, and philosophical, all in turn engrossed his attention; and though in his early years he had betrayed a taste for rhetorical studies, and had cultivated a glittering style of his own, besides writing several tragedies, yet nowhere has he much to say on

¹ ll. 667-8.

² Review of J. Warton's *Essay on the Writings and Genius of Pope*, vol. 1, in the *Literary Magazine*, 1756, I, 35-8 (quoted by A. S. West in his ed. of Pope's *Essay on Criticism*, p. 144; the reference I owe to Mr L. F. Powell).

³ *Biographia Literaria*, c. xiv (ed. Shawcross, II, 11).

artistic matters or on the questions that were agitating the minds of many of his contemporaries. Such pronouncements as he makes are all of an occasional kind, and are mostly concerned with doctrine in keeping with his creed as a Stoic. And for this material we have to turn to his *Letters to Lucilius* and to his formal essays; though that curious satire of his, known as *Apocolocyntosis*, is not without its interest in critical history.

Characteristic of his attitude towards literature and the literary art are his remarks on the grammarians who, he complains, are immersed in "the minutiae of the literary craft", in matters of style, in history and poetry. But "which of these", he asks, "has smoothed the way to virtue" (*Quis horum ad virtutem viam sternit*),¹ with all their care for syllables and words, their stories and their measuring of verses? For him the only study was philosophy, which he is careful to distinguish from rhetoric as being concerned with ideas, not words; and in philosophy itself he is interested solely in ethics, in the search for virtue. Hence his attack on much of the critical scholarship of the time; and his denunciation more particularly of those ancillary philological studies which had survived as a legacy of the Hellenistic period. In his essay *On the Shortness of Life*² he deplores the time wasted in laborious ingenuities such as the questions relating to the number of the oarsmen of Ulysses, the birthplace of Homer, or again the dates and authorship of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*; and such inquiries he describes as a disease among the Greeks (*Graecorum iste morbus*) to which a number of Romans had unhappily fallen victims.

Despite this profession of scorn for literature and all its works, no writer of the time was more skilled in artistic effects of a certain kind or in stylistic resources that dazzled by their energy, their neatness, and their astonishing turns; and some reasoned expression of his views on the subject of style would therefore have been valuable. Yet nowhere does he attempt to defend his art or to explain his break-away from the Ciceronian tradition. Such matters with him probably counted for little; though he notes in more than one place that in writing boldness was necessary. Thus he asserts that even writings of a simple

¹ *Letters to Lucilius*, 88, 5.

² § 13.

kind have their risky passages;¹ whereas for those who attempted anything great, he added, risks were unavoidable.² At the same time he is conscious that all is not well with his age; and occasionally he remarks on some of the more glaring abuses. Thus he points out that some among his contemporaries deliberately affected a manner that was abrupt and harsh, on the ground that it gave an air of strength and virility. Others, again, aimed at sweetness and smoothness; and with them it was largely a matter of the arrangement of sounds, "so caressing is their expression as it glides smoothly along" (*adeo blanditur, et molliter labitur*).³ Both styles alike are however condemned by Seneca, on the ground that they were mere tricks to attract attention. To him they are no more than the strange cut of a beard, or the wearing of flashy cloaks or transparent togas; and in this category he includes the "curling-tongs" style of Maecenas. Then, too, he has a word to say on the general cause of the decline in style, which he attributes, as was usual, to decay in morals. He explains, for instance, the intimate relations existing between character and mind, how if the character be vitiated the mind becomes corrupt; and he therefore insists that a corrupt or lawless style is merely the outcome of degeneracy in morals (*talis hominum oratio qualis vita*),⁴ a conception that was also in keeping with the Stoic doctrine of the poet (and orator) as *vir bonus*. Concerning poetry as such he has but little to say beyond commenting on the theory of inspiration, and recalling in that connexion Plato's saying that "in vain does one knock at the gates of poetry with a sane mind", and again Aristotle's, that "there is no great genius without a mixture of madness". His explanation is that by some divine force the poet's mind is raised above the ordinary and commonplace, and is thus enabled to arrive at something more than mortal utterance.⁵ And lastly, there is his practical advice as to the necessity for wide and judicious reading as a preliminary to good writing. Such reading, he maintains, is useful in nourishing a writer's gifts (*alut lectio ingenium*), and in preventing him from being satisfied with his own performances.⁶ But what is thus

¹ *Ep.* 59, 5.² *Ep.* 114, 11.³ *Letters to Lucilius*, 114, 16.⁴ *Ibid.*⁵ *On Peace of Mind*, 17, 10.⁶ *Letters to Lucilius*, 81, 1-7.

acquired, he adds, must be digested and re-created; otherwise it will merely pass into the memory without further result. These remarks, few and scattered, constitute the critical contribution of the younger Seneca, and their limitations are obvious; though in addition mention should perhaps be made of his satire *Apocolocyntosis*,¹ on account of its formal influence in later critical history. The work was a Menippean satire which took the form of a burlesque on the apotheosis of the emperor Claudius. In it the celestial senate is represented as holding a debate concerning the admission of Claudius to their divine assembly; and after Janus, Diespiter and Augustus have spoken, Claudius is contemptuously assigned to the care of the freedman Menander. The idea seems to have been amplified later in Lucian's *Council of the Gods*, which had many imitators at the Renaissance. And notable among such imitations was Boccalini's *Ragguagli di Parnaso* (1612), which exercised a marked influence on European literature, and more particularly on critical work in England during the seventeenth century.²

Of the rest of the critical writings of this period there is less to be said; though they witness to a variety of literary interests, and must needs be mentioned if a correct picture of the contemporary activities is to be formed. To this period belongs, for instance, the *Geography* of Strabo (60 B.C.—A.D. 20), a learned Greek who lived for some time at Rome, and whose treatise appeared probably in the second decade of the century. It was a work devoted obviously to matters of a scientific kind; yet in its pages are to be found many literary references, including comments on the Homeric criticism of Aristarchus and his school, citations from Hellenistic critics, as well as sporadic remarks on literary theory. Concerning Homer, in the first place, he takes up the position that the poet's narrative is mainly a record of real actors and scenes, as testified by a large array of writers, Polybius among the number.³ The wanderings of Ulysses in particular he places in the neighbourhood of

¹ See A. P. Ball, *The Satire of Seneca*, also N. Hieseltine, *Petronius* (Loeb Cl. Lib.).

² See J. E. Spingarn, *Critical Essays of the Seventeenth Century*, I, xxiii.

³ *Geog.* I, ii, 9-40.

Sicily; and by a detailed examination of the objections raised by Eratosthenes, Apollodorus, and others, he endeavours to establish his main thesis. His attack for the most part is directed against Eratosthenes, whose theory concerning Homer's free handling of fact he tries to confute with the help of earlier geographers and scholars. All he can allow is that Homer mingled fact with fancy in order to adorn and beautify his narrative; but for the rest, he maintains, Homer's work has for its basis a large mass of historical, geographical, and scientific facts. Apart from this, Strabo has also something to say about poetry in general. He is the first, for instance, to point out that prose follows poetry in the literary development;¹ and elsewhere in asserting the chief merit of a poet to consist in an accurate representation of the affairs of life,² he seems to be influenced by the realistic tendencies present in some of the Hellenistic poetry. As a Stoic, moreover, he stoutly opposed the doctrine of Eratosthenes according to which poets were said to aim at amusement, not instruction. In reply he quoted the ancient definition of poetry to the effect that it was none other than "a primitive philosophy guiding our morals, our tastes, and our actions";³ and thus, he maintained, Eratosthenes was wrong in describing poetry as a mere tissue of old wives' tales. That pleasure was bound up with poetry he did not deny; but it was of secondary importance. For poetry was essentially an enticement to more serious studies, a philtre for stimulating the desire for knowledge;⁴ and here he was repeating the doctrine put forward by Lucretius in explaining his reasons for adopting poetic form for his great work. From all this will be gathered the limitations of Strabo's contribution to literary criticism. Concerned mainly with establishing Homer as an authority on geography, he has but little regard for literary values, and therefore does nothing to help in the appreciation of Homer's art. Nor has he anything fresh to say on poetry in general. His poetic theories have merely an academic interest, being repetitions of Hellenistic doctrines with little or no bearing on contemporary problems. And he therefore stands, as far as

¹ *Geog.* i, ii, 6.

³ i, ii, 3.

² i, ii, 5.

⁴ i, ii, 8.

criticism is concerned, in complete detachment from his age, a survival of the Hellenistic scholar ridiculed by the younger Seneca.

Of more immediate interest was the work done by Roman scholars in their criticism of Virgil; though its aesthetic value bore no relation to the volume of the output, the criticism being mainly of a destructive and fault-finding kind. There was, for example, the attack made by Carvilius Pictor in his *Aeneidomastix*; and this was followed by an attempt on the part of Herennius to collect his *vitia* (or faults of style), and by the collection of his *furta* (or alleged plagiarisms) due to Perellius Faustus. Such works without a doubt gave a lead to many of the later critics; and their attacks were inspired by a natural reaction against the popularity of the Augustan poet, as well as by that distrust of innovation which was to remain a feature of criticism throughout its later history. Thus Virgil was in general accused of affectation and bad taste, his metaphors, his coinages, and his uncommon grammatical usages being all alike condemned. And the explanation given by Agrippa, one of Augustus's ministers, was that in the matter of style Virgil had been influenced by his patron Maccenas, whose proclivities in the direction of preciousness were familiar to all. At the same time further criticism of the poet came from Hyginus, the librarian of the Palatine library, and from Cornutus, the friend of Persius; while Asconius (c. A.D. 3-88), the author of a learned commentary on the speeches of Cicero, wrote also in vindication of Virgil his *Contra Obrectatores Vergilii*, a volume which has not survived. On the whole it was a phase of criticism that did not materially affect the position of Virgil, whose fame grew steadily throughout the century; though it has at least this interest, that it illustrates what was to prove a constant factor in criticism, namely, the blindness and inadequacy of contemporary critics.

Among the remaining forms of critical activity was the work of the grammarians, of whom Palaemon (fl. A.D. 35-70) was chief. As the preceptor of Quintilian, and the compiler of a famous *Latin Grammar* on which subsequent grammars were more or less based, he occupies a place of his own in the history

of criticism. At the same time critical interests were being betrayed by writers in other fields, as for instance in the work of Velleius Paterculus, whose *Historia Romana* (A.D. 30) contains certain references to literary history which he links up with the events he records. And while no great merit is attached to his treatment of the writers concerned—he omits Horace, and ranks Virgil with Rabirius as *princeps carminum*¹—he has at least the distinction of being the first to include literature in an historical survey. Apart from this he also has views on the causes that bring about the decline of literature, a matter that was exercising the minds of many of his contemporaries. The prevailing idea was expressed by Petronius too and the younger Seneca when they stated that the arts flourished only in an age of innocence, and that their decay was due to luxurious living and a decline of moral standards. Paterculus, however, puts forward the theory that the decline of literature is a natural sequel to a period of great literary achievement, something independent of social or moral conditions, and intimately bound up with literary processes themselves. Thus “imitation”, he explains,² nourishes genius and stimulates it, lifting it often to the highest planes. Yet to remain on the heights is difficult (*difficilisque in perfecto mora est*); men grow weary of imitating the inimitable, and zeal dies with the death of hope (*studium cum spe senescit*). Hence in all arts, he maintains, there emerge periods of mastery which are inevitably followed by periods of decline, owing to inability to rival the earlier masterpieces. In other words, literature is subject to the laws of change; it moves through phases of growth, perfection, and decay. And in this way he points out the limitations of the doctrine of “imitation”, at the same time suggesting the workings of some evolutionary process in connexion with literature.

And finally some brief notice must also be taken of those protests that were being made against the limitation of poetic themes to the conventional subject-matter of the Greek heroic cycle. Early in the century the poet Manilius had written a didactic poem *Astronomica*, in which he had set forth by the way his views on the need for giving new life to poetry by en-

¹ *Hist. Rom.* II, 36.

² I. 17.

larging its domain. He himself had endeavoured to extend its scope by taking astrology as his theme; and after recounting the subjects treated by Homer, Hesiod, and others, he makes his appeal in a manner reminiscent of the earlier Callimachus. Thus he laments the fact that all the paths to Helicon were crowded and worn (*omnis ad accessus Heliconis semita trita est*),¹ so that the throng could hardly drink at its exhausted fountains; and he therefore urges the quest for new and untrodden fields (*integra rorantes prata per herbas*), for hidden waters whose murmur no ear had heard, where no birds came, and where Phoebus with his heavenly flame had never alighted. It was a plea for the recognition of other than the hackneyed themes; and following Lucretius, he proposes and adopts the theme of science. And some fifty years later, in all probability, the demand was repeated in the poem *Etna*, a work of uncertain authorship, though attributed to Lucilius Junior, a friend of the younger Seneca. Here again there is the same attack on the familiar themes, the legends of the golden age, the stories of Troy, of Theseus, and the rest. But now they are assailed on other grounds.² As mythological fictions accepted as explanations of natural phenomena they are said to be misleading perversions of the truth, while many of the fables besides are described as impious and degrading to the gods. Of this the conception of Etna as the abode of Vulcan is quoted as an example; and the attack resolves itself into a condemnation of poetic fiction as a whole, and a plea for scientific truth as the true subject of poetry. Such utterances are not without their significance in relation to their age; and historically they have this further interest that they anticipate in a sense the objections raised by seventeenth-century critics to the monopoly of classical themes. Thus Cowley in one place refers to "the cold-meats of the Ancients" and "the threadbare tales of Thebes and Troy";³ and his views were shared by a number of French critics who argued in particular for the creation of a Christian epic.⁴ The

¹ *Astronomica*, III, Prol.; Prof. H. J. Rose points out the earlier enumeration of hackneyed themes in Virgil, *Georgics*, III, 3 ff.

² *Etna*, II, 9-93.

³ *Preface to his Poems* (1656).

⁴ See J. E. Spingarn, *Crit. Essays of the Seventeenth Century*, I, xxxv; II, 334.

animating motive was thus different from that of the earlier period; but in each case the significance of the protest was the same. It was a plea for freedom on behalf of the poet; and as such it was symptomatic of the conflict of opinion in literary matters that prevailed at Rome during the first half of the first century A.D.

CHAPTER V

THE CRITICAL REVIVAL AND THEORIES OF STYLE: TACITUS AND DEMETRIUS¹

NOT the least remarkable feature of the literary activities in antiquity was the revival of literary criticism which marked the latter half of the first century A.D., or to speak more exactly, the period between the death of Nero (A.D. 68) and the reign of the emperor Trajan (A.D. 98-117). As against the desultory and occasional efforts of writers belonging to the foregoing period, there now emerged a body of criticism which represented a solid contribution to the subject, and which, while rivalling in interest anything that had gone before, was destined to have considerable influence on the work of later ages. The outstanding contributors were Tacitus, Demetrius, "Longinus" and Quintilian, all great names in the history of criticism; though work of a more casual and superficial kind came also from Martial, the younger Pliny, Dio Chrysostom, and Plutarch. And whereas the output in general points to a renewed and extended interest in critical matters, as well as to a variety of approach to literary questions, at the same time there is visible throughout their work a common concern with first-century conditions and with the immediate problems presented by that age. Of the justification for associating Demetrius and "Longinus" with this stage in the critical development some account will be given later. Both writers were traditionally assigned to widely different dates; Demetrius to the third century B.C., "Longinus" to the third century A.D. But if conclusive evidence is not yet available to fix the exact dates of their respective works, there is at least a strong case for assigning them to this particular epoch, certainly

¹ *Texts and Translations*: Tacitus, *A Dialogue on Oratory*, ed. by Sir William Peterson (Loeb Cl. Lib.), 1930; *Demetrius On Style*, ed. by W. Rhys Roberts, 1902; ed. by W. Rhys Roberts (Loeb Cl. Lib.), 1927; trans. T. A. Moxon (Everyman's Lib.), London, 1934; extracts from *Demetrius On Style*, in J. D. Denniston, *Greek Literary Criticism*, pp. 196-207, London, 1924.

stronger than for accepting the traditional dates; and with this view modern scholarship may be said to be in general agreement.

With regard to the causes of this sudden revival of critical activities, first and foremost must be mentioned the changes that took place in the political and social conditions after the death of Nero. Under the wise administration of Vespasian (A.D. 69-79) peace had returned to Rome, putting an end for the time being to the earlier unrest and confusion; and the prosperity that resulted, after being fostered by Titus (A.D. 79-81), and enhanced under Nerva (A.D. 96-8) and Trajan (A.D. 98-117), had brought in its train further opportunities for culture, in spite of the interruption caused by the disturbances of the reign of Domitian (A.D. 81-96). Among the chief evidences of this change in the social atmosphere was the new enthusiasm for education, a matter which had hitherto been neglected by the State. Under Vespasian, however, the first attempt was made to remove this "flaw in Roman institutions"; and his recognition of Quintilian by means of an Imperial endowment constituted not merely an innovation that was to lead to a wider view of education, throughout the Empire, but also a proceeding that brought with it a change of attitude towards things of the mind, and thus gave, for the time being, new life to critical inquiries. In this way was commissioned one who, by genius and training alike, was well fitted for the task of establishing sound methods in education, and of inquiring into those literary theories and standards upon which education at the time was so largely based. And Quintilian's influence was widespread throughout the period. He was perhaps the most effective intellectual force of his generation; and the results of his efforts at purifying literary taste in general are seen in the inspiration he gave to more than one of his contemporaries. Nor was fresh impetus wanting in the multitude of critical questions that called for consideration. With the decline of literature an accumulation of urgent problems had presented themselves to the new generation; and the resulting criticism is largely an attempt to deal with these various problems. It was thus no longer merely a

question of the respective claims of the Asiatics and Atticists in oratory, or of those who advocated the classical Greeks as models in poetry as opposed to those who favoured the Alexandrian school. Interest in these matters had by no means ceased with the Augustans; but now attention was concentrated also on such themes as the causes that had brought about the decline of oratory (or prose style), the best methods of correcting the vicious style that prevailed in poetry and prose alike, or again, the evils of declamation, and the growing taste for archaic Roman poetry. It is therefore not strange to find that criticism at this stage was mainly concerned with matters of oratory and prose style, and that poetry as such came in for but casual treatment. To say that the interest in poetry had wholly vanished would be far from true; yet it cannot be doubted that, at a time when Statius and Martial were the leading poets, the poetic art had fallen somewhat from its high estate under Augustus. On the other hand a new vogue was being given to rhetorical studies by the movement initiated by Quintilian against the teaching and the influence of the younger Seneca. And it was not merely the false brilliance of Seneca's style against which war was waged. Now once again the old feud between philosophy and rhetoric was renewed. Quintilian, alarmed at the attraction felt by youth for the new philosophy, proceeded to champion the cause of rhetoric as the educational instrument best fitted for Romans; and his influence in this direction was far-reaching and decisive. It is, for instance, not without its significance that philosophers were twice banished from Rome in the course of this period.

With these then as the conditions out of which sprang the critical revival associated with this half-century, it now becomes possible to view in something like its proper setting the work done in the sphere of literary criticism. For the contribution of Quintilian we have to wait until late in the period, his *Training of an Orator* (*Institutio Oratoria*) being published towards the close of the century. In all probability, however, the works of Demetrius and "Longinus" had previously appeared, and with still greater certainty the contribution of Tacitus in his *Dialogue on Oratory*; and it is therefore with this work of Tacitus

(A.D. 55-120) that our survey may perhaps most conveniently begin. Any attempt at interpreting the *Dialogue* must, however, start with a consideration of the problems that have gathered round it of recent years—problems of authorship, date, and form, which must first be solved before the nature of the achievement can be understood. In the first place there is the question of its authorship. The work has been attributed to some writer other than Tacitus, owing to obvious discrepancies between its Ciceronian style and the terse, pregnant, and picturesque manner characteristic of the later Tacitus. This position however is no longer seriously maintained. For one thing, the diction of the work, its phrasing and syntax have definite points of resemblance with Tacitus's peculiar style.¹ Then, too, there is the well-known passage in a letter of the younger Pliny² reminding Tacitus of his dictum that for the composition of poetry the solitude of the woods is needed;³ and again, the general outlook of the work is also in keeping with what is known of Tacitus and his career. So that altogether there is now some amount of agreement on its Tacitean authorship; and indeed to rule otherwise would be no less unreasonable, as has been pointed out more than once, than to refuse to recognise Carlyle as the author of both his *Essays* and the later *Sartor Resartus*.

Closely bound up with this matter, however, is the much-vexed question of its date; and here there exists a more serious difference of opinion. There are those for instance who would place it somewhere about A.D. 81, that is, at the end of Vespasian's reign, or in the time of Titus, or possibly early in Domitian's reign; while others again regard it as a later production, written certainly after Domitian's death, and belonging probably to the period of the *Agriicola* (A.D. 98). The evidence for the later date rests mainly on the reference made towards the end of the work (c. 40) to the happy and prosperous conditions under which the book was written; a reference, it has been claimed, to the political situation under Nerva or Trajan, and one which was repeated in the *Agriicola* (c. 3). But

¹ *Dial. de Orat.* ed. A. Gudeman, pp. xlvi-xlix.

² *Letters*, ix, 10, 2.

³ *Dial.* c. 12, 1.

this view is also said to be confirmed by the general drift of the theorising in the *Dialogue* which shows signs of acquaintance with Quintilian's treatise, a work which did not appear before A.D. 94-5. And further, there is the suggestion that since Tacitus speaks of having listened to the discussion between Maternus and Aper (which is dated *c.* A.D. 74)¹ when "quite a young man" (*iuuenis admodum*),² he must actually have been writing at a date considerably later, certainly later than A.D. 81. None of these arguments can however be regarded as conclusive. In the first place, the reference to the good time experienced under the Imperial régime is not necessarily confined to the conditions under Trajan. It may apply equally well to the period under Vespasian and Titus, a time of reconstruction and repose, which would be all the more appreciated after the unrest of Nero's reign. And moreover it is significant that at the time Tacitus was a recipient of Imperial favours. "My political position", he states elsewhere, "was commenced by Vespasian, improved by Titus, and carried still higher by Domitian";³ and there is thus no reason for doubting that at this earlier period he was a strong supporter of the Imperial government. Indeed the weight of the argument here seems to lie with the earlier date; for the glowing eulogy on the Imperial régime would come more naturally from one in the first flush of enthusiasm, than from one who had previously undergone the disillusionments of the reign of Domitian. Then, too, it is difficult to see how any real support for the later date can be derived from evidence of Quintilian's influence in the *Dialogue*. For if Quintilian's work appeared late, his teaching had by then been operative for some twenty years or more; and it was inevitable that Tacitus should have been more or less affected much earlier in his career. Nor again can much weight be attached to Tacitus's somewhat patronising reference to himself as "quite a young man" about the year A.D. 74. The phrase need not necessarily imply a stage of marked maturity; the "teens" are notoriously far removed from those who have attained the sober "twenties". On the other hand, more convincing are the arguments which are advanced for the

¹ *Dial.* c. 17.² *Ibid.* c. 1.³ *Historics*, I, i.

composition of the *Dialogue* at the earlier date; and they are concerned for the most part with the theme and style of the work. Of the early training and success of Tacitus as an orator there is ample evidence. Up to A.D. 77 at least he was known as an illustrious pleader; and therefore one from whom in his earlier years a work on oratory might well be expected. Later on, such a production would be less likely; for he was then absorbed in political and historical inquiries which were to engage his attention for the rest of his life. And this theory is supported by the exuberant Ciceronian style in which the work is written, a style so different from that of his later writings as to suggest that it belongs to a different period. Already in *Agricola* signs of change become visible, a less studied balance and rhythm, a greater fondness for coloured and epigrammatic effects; and whereas it is hard to conceive of the *Dialogue* belonging to the same date as that work, the conception of a development of style presents no difficulties. Altogether, then, it would seem that the weight of the evidence rests with the earlier date, and that the *Dialogue* was most probably written about A.D. 81. To some minds, indeed, the arguments above appear decisive; more especially as that date is not inconsistent with marks of Quintilian's influence, neither does it render inexplicable the eulogy of the Imperial rule.

Assuming now that the *Dialogue* was written by Tacitus in the earlier part of his career, we turn to consider its form and significance, and the nature of its contribution to literary criticism. What it claims to be, in the first place, is a discussion of a dramatic kind addressed by Tacitus to his friend Fabius Justus, in answer to inquiries as to the causes of the decline of contemporary oratory. For that purpose, so it is stated, Tacitus recalls a debate which he had heard in his youth between some of the leading public figures; and thus the interlocutors of the dialogue are certain historical characters, Maternus a distinguished poet-orator, Aper a successful pleader, Messalla a man of noble birth and an accomplished speaker, together with Secundus an orator of parts, though lacking in genius and force. The scene is placed in the house of Maternus (cc. 1-4); and the debate opens with Aper remonstrating with Maternus on his

poetic leanings and enlarging on the superiority of oratory as compared with poetry, to which Maternus briefly replies in defence of poetry (cc. 5-14). This dispute on the relative claims of oratory and poetry thus constitutes the first section of the dialogue; and it is followed by a second section (cc. 14-27) consisting of a debate on the merits of ancient as opposed to modern orators. In the meantime Messalla has appeared and is challenged by Aper to make good his preference for the ancients. Aper for his part does not admit any decline, though he acknowledges differences due to differences of conditions (cc. 14-24); and Messalla thereupon proceeds to vindicate the ancients, when Maternus breaks in with a reminder concerning the subject first proposed, that it was not so much the decline of eloquence as the causes underlying that decline (cc. 24-7). Then the third section (cc. 28-42) of the dialogue begins, in which the real subject of the inquiry is for the first time approached; and Messalla puts forward as the main cause of the decline the moral decadence resulting from an indifferent system of education and the superficial training bound up with declamations (cc. 28-35). Here Messalla's speech comes abruptly to an end. There was a gap in the parent MS.; and the rest of what Messalla had to say is lost, together with possibly some remarks of Secundus. In the part that survives (cc. 36-42) Maternus is still concerned with the main question; and he attributes the decline not so much to moral or educational factors as to the changed conditions of public life, to the Imperial régime with its more stable form of government. And in pointing out that under those happier conditions there is some compensation for the loss of eloquence, he brings the dialogue to a fitting close.

Such then in rough outline is the scheme of the *Dialogue*. It professes to be a reported conversation, having for its subject the causes of the decline of eloquence, though it digresses somewhat strangely for two-thirds of its length, the proposed topic being treated only in the final section, so that the work actually consists of three separate discussions on three separate subjects; and here there are obvious difficulties that call for comment. In the first place there can be little doubt that the work in

reality is no record of an actual debate, and that it is mainly, if not entirely, a piece of fiction. This is suggested primarily by its artistic structure, which is clearly no reproduction of a casual and impromptu discussion between intimate friends, such as the *Dialogue* purports to be. There may indeed have been some informal meeting such as Tacitus depicts, which may have afforded him the suggestion for the work; but if so, Tacitus's account of it is greatly modified, so that for practical purposes the result may be regarded as an original composition. Nor does the definite statement to the contrary made early in the work (c. 2) dispose of this assumption; for that claim to actuality is nothing more than a recognised convention in works of the kind, a device for giving authority to the various pronouncements. And all this is confirmed by a closer inspection of the text which reveals the fact that Tacitus throughout is indebted to Cicero for many of his details, taken not only from *De Oratore* and *Brutus* but also from *Hortensius* and *De re publica*. A considerable number of the ideas in the *Dialogue* for instance are clearly Ciceronian in origin, as is also the language and phrasing of the speakers; and while it is possible that these passages may represent genuine utterances of interlocutors familiar with Cicero's writings, the same quality of genuineness can scarcely be attached to dramatic devices and motives which coincide in remarkable fashion with Cicero's work. Thus many of Tacitus's chapters open with reminiscences of Cicero; in his work, as in Cicero's, the debate is begun by two eminent orators familiar to the author; or again, Aper as a *dissimulator artis*, his conciliatory efforts as an orator, and the late arrival of Messalla, all these details and more can be paralleled in Cicero's writings, and they have seemingly been appropriated by Tacitus for his own purposes.¹

With the recognition of the *Dialogue* as a creation of Tacitus's own, a new light is thrown upon the work in general, and more particularly upon its design and structure. The scheme would now appear to be no fortuitous plan, but one designed and

¹ See *Dial. de Orat.* ed. A. Gudeman, pp. lxxxvii-xcvi and E. Köstermann, "Der Taciteische *Dialogus* und Ciceros Schrift *De re publica*" (*Hermes*, lxxv 396-421).

constructed with definite aims in view. And in these aims would seem to lie the explanation of its peculiar form; while the utterances of the several speakers, interesting historically when associated with Maternus and the rest, acquire now a new importance as belonging to Tacitus himself. Of the actual design underlying the structure it is impossible to speak with any certainty; but that Tacitus was influenced by one or more of the following considerations seems to be in the highest degree likely. Thus its threefold debate may have been due, in the first place, to nothing more than a desire to follow Cicero's treatment in his *De Oratore*, where the discussion is similarly divided into three sections, each with a different topic. And since Tacitus at this date was clearly writing under Ciceronian influence, he may simply have adopted the earlier form without additional reason. On the other hand, this particular form may have been deliberately chosen with a view to dramatic effect. Tacitus's main thesis, we have seen, is contained in the concluding section, and more especially in the pronouncement of Maternus (cc. 40-1), that the decline in oratory was the result of the happier conditions under which they lived, and that in view of the political unsettlement and unrest necessary for the production of the finest oratory, there was no real reason for lamenting its decline. To Romans brought up on oratory, however, and accustomed to regard it as the highest form of art, such a statement would savour of heresy and would require some amount of preparation for its acceptance. And this Tacitus would seem to provide in his opening sections, in which the position and the prevailing theories of oratory are challenged—a preparation, it has recently been pointed out, for which a parallel exists in Cicero's *De re publica*.¹ Thus Aper's materialistic claims on behalf of oratory are met with Maternus's eulogy of poetry, while Aper in his turn maintains against Messalla the relativity of standards in oratory. By this means the way is prepared for a change of outlook and for acquiescence in the somewhat startling contention of Tacitus. And in that case the earlier sections would be no mere preliminary flourishes; they would serve a definite dramatic purpose and thus form

¹ See E. Köstermann, *op. cit.* p. 400.

an organic part of the dialogue. At the same time there is the further possibility that the threefold debate is nothing more than an attempt on the part of Tacitus to turn over in his mind certain questions of his day, upon which as yet he had come to no definite conclusion. The relative values of poetry and oratory, and of the earlier orators and his own contemporaries may well have been matters that were being debated at the time, along with the more general inquiry into the causes of the decline of oratory; and there would be nothing strange in their inclusion in one work with the last-mentioned subject as the main theme. It is at any rate not without its significance that with Tacitus the dialogue is of the nature of an essay, not a disguised treatise as with Cicero. He avoids throughout dogmatic exposition, is content with balancing evidence, and in no case does he put forward any final conclusions.

In whatever way, however, we may prefer to explain the structure of the *Dialogue*, enough has now been said to warrant a conjecture as to the general interpretation of the work and its value as an expression of the views of its author. Written by Tacitus apparently at a time when he was a distinguished orator and a rising public man, it naturally deals with oratory; and a clue is at once given to the meaning of the work when the statement is made that all the arguments of the interlocutors, though widely divergent, had in them some element of truth (*diversas sed probabiles*).¹ What Tacitus therefore does is to set out the arguments on both sides of the questions raised, thus reflecting what may well have been a conflict of ideas in his own mind. And this is suggested by the discussion of the status and usefulness of poets and orators, and more especially by his treatment of the problem whether the standards of the Ciceronian age were necessarily binding on the orators (and writers) of his day. From what is known of his later developments in style, it is not unreasonable to suppose that this question may have been a very real one to him at the time; and whereas Messalla advances the orthodox views on the subject, Aper supplies views with which Tacitus was doubtless in sympathy. Then, too, in connexion with the decline of oratory, when

¹ *Dial.* c. 1, 18.

Messalla puts forward the generally accepted explanation and is followed by Maternus with his novel and striking theory, it can scarcely be doubted that here once again Tacitus is assembling all the arguments available, by way of clearing up a difficulty of a personal kind. So that it is as a free discussion of certain urgent questions on the part of the author that the *Dialogue* is probably intended to be read; and whereas it has been usual to regard Maternus as the sole mouthpiece of the author, it is impossible to deny that all the interlocutors alike are in some degree representative of Tacitus's views. In the arguments of Aper and Messalla there are ideas that were doubtless shared by Tacitus; even though it is in Maternus that we see best the political and historical interests of the author, and from Maternus comes also that subtle compliment to the Imperial régime, which may perhaps have been the immediate occasion of the work.

So far we have been considering difficulties of interpretation bound up with the *Dialogue* as a whole; and before turning to estimate its critical value something further must be said concerning its literary qualities, which, while contributing in no slight measure to its success, have also won for it the description of an *aureolus libellus*. In adopting the dialogue device as the medium for the expression of his thought Tacitus was evidently following the example of Cicero; and his handling of the device is of a most skilful kind. Indeed in this matter he challenges comparison with Cicero himself, and in some points he even excels him, notably in the skill with which he portrays his characters and gives a sense of reality to his historical background. Most convincingly, for instance, is the scene of the discussion called up: a poet's study on the morning after a great literary success, and a gathering of his friends for conversation and debate. And the picture is filled in with life-like drawings of the speakers concerned, to each of whom is given a distinct individuality: Maternus, cultured and idealistic, in love with nature and solitude; Aper, a forceful talker, of a practical and materialistic turn of mind; and Messalla, a grave and reverend senior, imbued with what was best in the old Roman spirit, and scornful of new ways and popular success. Then, too, the sense

of reality is maintained throughout. Each speaker has his distinctive mode of utterance in keeping with his character; an element of liveliness is added by means of dramatic interruptions and comments; while yet other realistic touches consist in Aper's compliments to his opponents, with which as a practised pleader he tries to disarm their criticism. So that altogether the impression received is that of an actual historical discussion, artistically and convincingly reproduced. And to its general effectiveness the Ciceronian style of the work in no slight measure contributes. In its fluent movement, its balanced periods, and elaborate similes was provided a manner that was admirably in keeping with the orators concerned, and was at the same time well suited for the exposition of serious thought.

It is as a contribution to critical literature, however, that the *Dialogue* ultimately claims attention; and as an expression of the views of one who was himself perhaps the most original of Latin stylists, it is, both intrinsically and historically, a work of surpassing interest. All the topics treated are naturally not of equal importance; and least significant is the handling of the question relating to the comparative values of oratory and poetry (cc. 5-14). To the youthful Tacitus the question may have occurred merely as a convenient opening; and in any case the treatment is singularly superficial and unconvincing. On the one hand, he marshals in Philistine fashion the arguments in favour of the superiority of oratory: its public utility, the status and prestige it confers; and with these he contrasts the short-lived and limited fame of the poet, and the arduous and unsocial character of his way of life.¹ On the other hand, he also produces arguments in favour of poetry; he disparages the materialism of his previous arguments, exalts poetry as the fruit of communion with Nature, and recalls in conventional fashion the honours that had ever been paid to poets.² As a serious pronouncement on the question at issue it is all very vague and disappointing; and the discussion, it must be confessed, does not carry us very far.

Of a totally different nature is the debate that follows on the standards of oratory and prose style (cc. 14-27); and here we

¹ *Dial.* cc. 5-9.

² *Ibid.* cc. 11-13.

cannot but feel that Tacitus is thinking things out for himself and facing a genuine problem in his own literary development. With regard to the prevailing conditions some statement has already been made. On the one hand there was the widespread degeneration of style, the craze for novelty at all costs, and the unreasoned use of all sorts of ingenuities which had led to extravagances and absurdities of the most glaring kind. And on the other hand, there was the reaction due to the new educational movement—the efforts that were being made, by Quintilian more especially, to stem the tide of bad taste that flooded society, by restoring the healthier traditions of the Ciceronian age. That Tacitus is influenced by the new educational effort is suggested in the first place by the Ciceronian style he adopts. And this is confirmed by the views he expresses through the mouth of Messalla, which amount to a defence of the earlier standards in oratory and a wholesale condemnation of contemporary methods. Thus, to begin with, he claims for the Ciceronian age at Rome the same predominance in oratory as was universally conceded to the age of Demosthenes among the Greeks; an argument, it should be noted, based on the idea of parallelism familiar to Roman critics. Just as Demosthenes stood first, and was followed in merit by Aeschines, Hyperides, and Lysias, so, it was urged, among Roman orators Cicero ranked first, while Calvus, Asinius, Caesar, Caelius, and Brutus were all alike regarded as superior to those who came both before and after.¹ Nor could their pre-eminence be really called into question by such objections as were sometimes raised, namely, that as stylists they differed among themselves, and also indulged in mutual recriminations. The latter, it is argued, arose out of personal, not artistic, differences; and while in point of style Calvus was more concise, Asinius more rhythmical, Caesar more dignified, Caelius more biting, Brutus more weighty, and Cicero more impassioned, rich, and vigorous, yet all alike were characterised by the same soundness (*sanitatem*) or sanity of style, so that in spite of manifold differences, they may be said to have shared in the same taste and aims. As for the reigning fashion in oratory, that is condemned outright as

¹ *Dial.* c. 25.

being unworthy and even degrading. Licentious in its use of language, shallow and conceited in its thought, it is said to have aimed at simulating the effects of stage-dancing by the use of cunningly devised rhythms; until latterly it had become a by-word that "orators speak wantonly and actors dance eloquently".¹ Of the more modern *rhetoires*, it is true, Cassius Severus is singled out as having claims to the title of *orator*, by reason of those qualities which distinguished him from those who came after—his breadth of culture, his charm of wit, his strength and vigour. Yet he too is said to have had more venom than real passion in his oratory; he was the first to treat lightly the arrangement of his material, and to indulge in improprieties and scurrilities; so that he was really no more than an unskilled fencer, a brawler, not a trained fighter.² The fact was that to Tacitus glaring artifice and ungoverned expression were distasteful wherever he found them. To the "curling-tongs" (*calamistri*) style of Maecenas and the jingles of Gallio he preferred the crude impetuosity of Gaius Gracchus or the imperfect finish of Crassus; and he reiterates with emphasis that "it is better to clothe an utterance in genuine homespun than to make it conspicuous in the showy colours of a courtesan".³

But while Tacitus thus states the case for recognising the orators of the Ciceronian age as the absolute standards in oratory, at the same time he is alive to other considerations which have a direct bearing on the subject. Apparently harbouring the thought that a change in oratory was inevitable, he puts forward a defence not only of the principle of change, but also of the main innovations seen in post-Ciceronian methods; and this defence he submits through the mouth of Aper, adding also reasons for questioning the validity of the absolute standards already mentioned. First comes the challenging statement that "the forms and types of oratory change with the times",⁴ so that of necessity there can be no fixed standards of excellence; and by way of illustration he shows how Gaius Gracchus had improved on Cato, Crassus on Gaius Gracchus, and Cicero on them all. From this it followed that subsequent changes were not necessarily for the worse, and that

¹ *Dial.* c. 26.² *Ibid.*³ *Ibid.*⁴ *Ibid.* c. 18.

it was mere prejudice to condemn all innovations outright. And this leads on to a further statement concerning the causes of those changes, namely, that they were to be attributed to altered social conditions and to changes in public taste.¹ Thus it is asserted in connexion with Cassius Severus (who is taken as the earliest representative of the new type of oratory) that his departure from Ciceronian methods was due, not to lack of ability or culture, but to his perception of the needs of the age in which he lived. His public, it is pointed out, no longer required the formality of lengthy and involved orations, with all the tedious divisions prescribed by Hermagoras and Apollodorus, or with long-drawn arguments about pleas and procedure. Such methods were said to have had their day; and what was demanded now was a more direct and novel form of treatment which attained its ends by concise statement, by striking utterances (*colore sententiarum*), and brilliant and effective word-pictures (*nitore et cultu descriptionum*).² And these were methods that appealed to all, supplying the hearers with memorable phrases, with sparkling epigrams and poetic reminiscences. Nor was there any doubt in commending these changes; they were regarded as legitimate extensions of the orator's art, adding grace and force to his appeal. And indeed to disparage their value, adds Tacitus in characteristic fashion, would be like condemning a modern temple with its marble and gold, because it was not built of coarse stone and bricks.³

Such then is the case presented for the innovations in oratory; and this position is reinforced by certain doubts cast on the value of the oratory of the Ciceronian age. With the Atticists in general a number of grave faults were found, each of them, it is stated, falling short of the necessary standard. It is noted, for instance, that Calvus was no longer read, his work being deficient in elegance and finish; with Caelius, again, was associated much that was commonplace and slipshod in his phrasing, arrangement, and style; nor could either Brutus or Julius Caesar be said to have excelled in oratory, owing to other interests; while Asinius in modelling himself on Accius and Pacuvius produced much that was formless and dry.⁴ In short,

¹ *Dial.* c. 19.² *Ibid.* c. 20.³ *Ibid.* *ad fin.*⁴ *Ibid.* c. 21.

the main charge brought against the Atticists was their lack of vitality, their anaemic quality, and this was held to be true of the leaders of the movement. Of the rest there was even less to be said. They were summarily dismissed as being "all inmates of the same infirmary" (*in eodem valetudinario*), concerned with but "the skin and bones" (*ossa et maciem*)¹ of oratory; whereas for true eloquence more was needed. "There can be no beauty of form", added Tacitus, "where the veins are prominent, or where one can count the bones; sound healthful blood must fill out the limbs, and riot over the muscles, concealing the sinews in turn under a ruddy complexion and a graceful exterior."² And of this conception the Atticists were said to have fallen short. Nor was Cicero free from limitations as a model, though it was conceded that he had striven against the Atticists, and had done much to improve oratorical style. He had, for instance, shown the way in the selection and arrangement of words and in the use of striking and pointed utterance; while everywhere, it is acknowledged, he had excelled in judgment and taste. In his early work however he is said to have fallen short of his own high standards, to have been tedious and long-winded, lacking in polish and splendour, deficient also in rhythmical quality and in that memorable phrasing that ensured attention; and these blemishes, so it is stated, were being imitated by writers of the Ciceronian school.³

In this way, then, does Tacitus present the arguments for and against accepting the standards and methods of the orators of the Ciceronian age. And while he himself confesses to some amount of exaggeration, particularly in his depreciation of Cicero,⁴ yet the general significance of the debate and its bearing on contemporary problems can scarcely be missed. Important, in the first place, are the views he puts forward as to the relativity of standards in style. While fully recognising the decline in style among his contemporaries, he boldly raises the question whether the remedy lay in a return to Ciceronian Latinity, or whether the time had not come for recognising the fact that, since forms of art changed with the age, some modifi-

¹ *Dial. c. 21 ad init.*

² *Ibid. ad fin.* (tr. Peterson).

³ *Ibid. cc. 22-3.*

⁴ *Ibid. c. 24.*

cation of those standards was needed owing to changes in social conditions and taste. To the question thus mooted, it is true, he returns no explicit answer. He submits his new principles in tentative fashion, balancing in one scale the weight of tradition and authority, and in the other, tendencies which seemed rooted in human nature. Yet there can be little doubt as to which side he inclined; to have raised the question was in itself an indication, involving as it did a challenge to the orthodoxy of the day. And for the rest, all doubt vanishes when the discussion is viewed in connexion with Tacitus's own development, and the changes subsequently introduced into his literary style. As yet he is palpably a Ciceronian in all his details, with the rolling periods, the formal and copious diction, the elaborate Figures, the balanced and rhythmical eloquence of the earlier master; whereas later on he was to fashion a new style of his own—sinewy, terse, piquant and picturesque, precisely that more direct and novel form of expression which, according to the *Dialogue*, the new age required. Thus it is significant that he approved in the new oratory of all those devices that stimulated interest and made for variety and colour; and at the same time he condemned such things as the languid and heavy style of the chroniclers (*tarda et iners structura in morem annalium*), or the fashion for ending all periods with one and the same cadence (*omnes clausulas uno et eodem modo*).¹ And the results are seen in the unorthodoxy of his later style; in the daring use he makes of vivid words and elliptical constructions, his concern for the concise and the emphatic at the expense of harmony and rhythm, or again, his fondness for such things as epigrams, purple patches, pen-pictures, mordant and memorable phrases, or poetic reminiscences of Virgil and others. He nowhere declaims or falls into turgidity or bombast; he has simply developed the latent possibilities of the new oratory, while discarding its excesses. And in the *Dialogue* he anticipates by his arguments this later development, thus giving to that work a unique and personal interest.

There yet remains to be considered the third of the topics discussed by Tacitus, namely, the question of the causes of the

¹ *Dial.* c. 22 *ad fin.*

decline of oratory (cc. 28-42); and here once again will be found certain pronouncements of value which have, however, been subject to some misrepresentation in the past. As before, the dialogue form permits an expression of views from more than one standpoint; and Tacitus begins by submitting through the mouth of Messalla those arguments, based on moral and educational grounds, which had already been put forward by Petronius, the two Senecas and others, though from Tacitus they now receive a more complete and reasoned treatment. Of the moral factors he mentions the general decay of the old Roman virtue, the laziness of youth, the slackness of parents, while he also alludes to the craze for actors, gladiators, and horse-racing;¹ all of which, he maintains, conduced to an atmosphere of laxity in which a vigorous oratory could find no place. Apart from this, however, there were the changes that had taken place in educational method—the neglect of that broad culture and systematic training advocated by Cicero—and to this factor is attached a yet more considerable influence. Thus it is pointed out that the training of youth no longer included those liberal studies and, in particular, that concern with psychology which enabled a man to deal effectively with all subjects and audiences.² Nor again, was sufficient importance attached to actual practice; whereas skill in expression, it was urged, came not from theoretical knowledge (*arte*) only, but from natural ability (*facultate*) fostered by continual exercise (*usu*).³ The fact was that the vitality of the earlier methods had been completely lost. The education of youth was left to professional rhetoricians who relied on the mechanical drill of *suasoriae* and *controversiae*, in which were discussed in fantastic fashion such far-fetched themes as “the reward due to regicides” or “the alternatives of an outraged maid”.⁴ And this, in substance, the explanation usually given of the contemporary decline in oratory, was in some measure endorsed by Tacitus in virtue of Messalla’s statement.

At the same time he is conscious of other and more profound influences at work; and these views, representing an entirely different approach to the subject, Tacitus puts forward in the

¹ *Dial.* cc. 28-9.² *Ibid.* c. 31.³ *Ibid.* c. 33.⁴ *Ibid.* c. 35.

concluding statement of Maternus (cc. 36-end), thereby giving utterance to one of his most original doctrines. That social conditions had a bearing on human activities was a commonplace that dated at least from the time of Polybius; and Cicero in more than one place had referred to the theory, describing eloquence as the product of peaceful conditions and a well-governed state.¹ Of a totally different kind however is the conclusion of Tacitus, arrived at after an analysis of all the circumstances. To him the great oratory of the past appeared as the fruit not of tranquillity but unsettlement, the outcome of fierce hatreds and civil strife which found expression in political feuds, schisms, impeachments and the like. Such at any rate had been the conditions prevailing in the age of Cicero; and the eloquence thus occasioned was said to have grown to greatness by reason of the ample deliberations permitted in the ancient forum and the contagious enthusiasms of its assemblies.² And upon this, his main thesis, Tacitus insists in strenuous fashion, confuting Cicero's position while deliberately embodying in places his actual phrases. Thus great oratory, he maintained, was no product of well-governed states (*in bene constitutis civitatibus*);³ it had not existed, for instance, in Sparta or Macedonia or Persia, all of which were states with settled governments. At Rhodes and Athens, on the other hand, where the populace was all-powerful, it had greatly flourished; and similarly at Rome as long as the constitution was unstable, and faction and discord prevailed in senate and forum.⁴ The fact was, as Tacitus categorically states, that oratory was no "tranquil or peaceful art" (*otiosa et quieta res*),⁵ but rather "the foster-child of licence which fools call liberty" (*alumna licentiae quam stulti libertatem vocant*).⁶ It kept company with sedition, it inflamed the unbridled mob; it owed allegiance to none; it was devoid of all reverence, was insolent, rash, and overbearing.⁷ And it was therefore no wonder that it had ceased to flourish under the happier régime of Vespasian and Titus. In other

¹ Cf. *Brut.* xii, 45; *De Orat.* i, 4, 14.

² *Dial.* cc. 36-9.

³ *Ibid.* c. 40; cf. *Brut.* xii, 45.

⁴ *Ibid.* c. 40.

⁵ *Ibid.* c. 40; cf. *Brut.* xii, 45: *pacis comes otique socia*.

⁶ *Ibid.* c. 40; cf. *Cic. De re publ.* i, 68: *licentia quam illi solam libertatem putant*.
See E. Köstermann, *op. cit.* p. 416.

⁷ *Ibid.* c. 40.

words, the ultimate causes of its decline lay not so much in moral or educational factors, as in those radical changes of a political and social kind which distinguished the earlier days of Tacitus from the stirring times of the Republic.

With this then as the gist of Tacitus's discussion in his *Dialogue* it is not difficult to see what there is that is original in his performance, as well as his importance in the critical development. Of his debt to Cicero's teaching there is abundant evidence, apart from those stylistic features to which reference has already been made. Throughout his pages may be traced unmistakable reminiscences of *Brutus*, *Hortensius*, *De Oratore* and *De re publica*, including not only phrases that have been mentioned, but a host of Ciceronian ideas, such as the orator's need for wide learning, a knowledge of psychology, and the like.¹ And while Tacitus's debt is clear, equally clear is the fact that he is no servile imitator. What he has borrowed he has fashioned freely to his own purposes; and indeed, no one was more conscious of the need for such originality of treatment, if we may judge from his dictum concerning the wide difference between submitting an idea that has been fairly assimilated and something on the other hand merely taken over from others.² Hence the freshness and breadth of his outlook, which reveal themselves in many brilliant reflexions that are full of profound insight and give expression to his ideas in memorable form. Thus the oratory of his day he likens to "a dethroned queen", "a mistress art degraded to a common handicraft";³ while his central idea of the need for political turmoil as a condition precedent to the creation of great oratory is forcefully suggested when he compares such oratory to "a flame that needs fuel and fanning, and grows bright only as it burns".⁴ Elsewhere he attributes to all forms of literary expression something that is sacred and worthy of reverence;⁵ and incidentally he gives a list of the poetic "kinds", with their characteristic qualities, including tragedy and the epic, the lyric with its charm, the

¹ See A. Gudeman, *Dialogus*, pp. xciff. and E. Köstermann, *op. cit.*

² *Dial.* c. 32 *ad init.*

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.* c. 36 *ad init.*; see also J. E. Sandys, *History of Class. Schol.* I, 290 n.

⁵ *Ibid.* c. 10.

wanton elegy, the bitter iambic, and the sportive epigram.¹ Nor is his casual remark on the true test of literary excellence without its significance. The work of the true orator, he maintains, should have qualities that make it a source of perennial pleasure;² and here, as in Horace, is implied that principle which was to be expounded with greater emphasis in the pages of "Longinus".

Yet details of this kind are after all of but secondary interest; and Tacitus's real contribution to critical thought lay in his shrewd analysis of the causes of the decline of oratory, in his suggested remedy, and the new methods employed in the course of his discussion. In accounting for the decline, in the first place, Tacitus had made a distinct advance in critical theorising. Not content with the earlier explanations of a deterioration in morality and taste, or the growth of a false rhetoric in the teaching of the schools, he maintained that since oratory was a form of political expression it had been primarily affected by political changes, that is, by those vast differences which distinguished Imperial from Republican Rome. And since to his thinking the essential difference was not so much the loss of Republican liberty as the cessation of that political strife which had been the root cause of the earlier triumphs in oratory, it is to that factor that he attributes the decay of contemporary oratory; and in thus viewing things in their wider perspective he undoubtedly gets near to the heart of the problem. Equally valuable, however, are the views he puts forward concerning the standards of oratory, which he regards as by no means fixed, but of necessity changing with the times. As against the orthodoxy of contemporary critics, he suggests that the remedy for the current abuses was not necessarily a return to the Ciceronian manner, but that some modification had become inevitable owing to changes in society and taste, and that, further, the standards to be adopted lay in a livelier and less formal style, of which the new oratory, deprived of its excesses, formed an excellent illustration. Thus does he expound the relativity of standards in style, the need for each generation to work out its own literary salvation; and in so doing he asserts

¹ *Dial.* c. 10.

² *Ibid.* c. 22.

with some diffidence the rights of innovation, while challenging indirectly the recognised creed of his day. And lastly, there are his methods and general critical outlook, which surpass in permanent interest even his specific doctrines. In his hands criticism, for the time being, ceases to be dogmatic and scholastic in kind; a return is made to the dialectical methods of Plato, so that literature is now approached, not with the object of laying down absolute rules, but in order to inquire to understand, and thus to explain. Then, too, by him, a serious and effective use is made of the historical method in criticism. Literary phenomena, instead of being isolated, are now considered in relation to their social and historical environments; with the result that fresh light is thrown on a much-vexed question and upon matters of style generally. Thus by Tacitus a new spirit as well as new and fruitful methods were brought to criticism; and in this consisted perhaps his best service and certainly his real originality. To him literature was an expression of the national life, ever changing in form, bound by no rigid rules, but responsive to influences both social and political; so that it was only in the light of environment that literature could be fully understood. Such an attitude constituted a challenge to the established classicism; but it was one that has since become characteristic of modern criticism. And in his *Dialogue* nothing is of greater interest for modern readers than the use he makes of the historical method, of which he is an early, and not the least skilful, exponent.

It has been already said that to the latter half of the first century A.D.—the period of Tacitus's critical activities—several other important works of criticism may with some degree of probability be assigned; and of them the Greek work of Demetrius *On Style* or *De Elocutione* (περὶ ἐμπνεύσεως) may perhaps here be conveniently treated, as belonging probably to much the same date as Tacitus's *Dialogue*, besides having also as its subject a treatment of prose style. It is true that Demetrius's approach to his subject is radically different from that of Tacitus. Whereas Tacitus carries to a stage further the earlier inquiries into an immediate problem, the decline of oratory and prose style, Demetrius on the other hand follows

the main track of the rhetorical tradition, and has therefore for his object an exposition of the principles of prose style. Yet both were doubtless inspired, if in different degrees, by the prevailing conditions. If Demetrius's connexion with Rome was less intimate than that of Tacitus, it may well nevertheless have been close enough to warrant the conjecture that he was not wholly unaffected by the degeneracy of style and the educational interests then current.

Before considering his performance, however, something must first be said concerning the problems of date and authorship which, as in the case of Tacitus's *Dialogue*, have gathered around the work. Up to modern times the treatise was attributed to Demetrius Phalereus (d. 283 B.C.), a pupil of Theophrastus and subsequently governor of Athens (317-307 B.C.), who assisted in forming the Library at Alexandria and wrote a *Rhetoric* which has not survived. Milton, for instance, in his *Tractate on Education* mentions one "Phalereus" in his list of ancient authorities on rhetoric; and there the reference is obviously to this particular work, to Demetrius Phalereus's *De Elocutione* as it was called, which for some time had been a familiar text-book in most centres of learning. Already at the Renaissance however its authorship had been questioned, owing mainly to a reference in the text to Demetrius Phalereus himself (§ 289), which suggested some other author and a later date; and since then evidence has accumulated which goes in no slight measure to confirm that position.¹ In the first place it will perhaps be conceded that, from what is known of Demetrius Phalereus as a writer, it is highly improbable that he was the author of the work in question. As one of the earliest representatives of that florid style which gave rise to the Asiatic manner and the degeneration of taste, his treatment of style, it might be argued, would scarcely have been of the judicious and broad-minded kind characteristic of the treatise. Quite apart from this, however, the actual treatment of the subject in accordance with classes or types of style seems to point to a comparatively late date of composition. At any rate such

¹ See W. Rhys Roberts's earlier ed. of *Demetrius On Style*, pp. 49 ff. for a detailed consideration, of which a summary account is given here.

treatment had formed no part of the methods of either Aristotle or Theophrastus. It had apparently come into vogue first in Roman times, when the author of *Ad Herennium*, Cicero, Philodemus, and Dionysius of Halicarnassus all give evidence of familiarity with such divisions; so that there is at least a *prima facie* case for connecting the work with the first century B.C. or even later. And this is supported by references in the text to Archidemus (§ 34) and Artemon (§ 223), both of whom were probably writers of the second century B.C.; and further by the distinction accorded to Demosthenes who is frequently quoted—a treatment characteristic of Roman times rather than of an earlier period. In addition to this the language of the treatise has been shown to contain many post-classical forms, words and phrases reminiscent of the age of Plutarch; while there are besides numerous details of grammar and syntax which go to suggest a later date. Thus the use of the word *ἐμπνεῖα* (style) in the title, instead of the classical *λέξις*, is not without its significance; whereas allusions to the Peripatetics (§ 181) and the New Comedy (§ 204) are more in keeping with Graeco-Roman times than with the age of Demetrius Phalereus. Altogether then it would seem, in the light of these details, that the only conclusion possible is that the work belongs to post-classical times, to the first century B.C. at least. And if we may go further and regard the classification of the four styles, which is a feature of the work, as an extension of the threefold scheme familiar to Cicero and others, then the implication plainly is that the work is still later and belongs in all likelihood to the first century A.D.

It will thus be seen from this internal evidence that the traditional authorship rests on no very satisfactory grounds, and that Demetrius Phalereus can scarcely have been the writer of the work in question. And this is indeed confirmed by evidence of an external kind, for on examination it is found that there nowhere exists in early writings any definite association of the work with Demetrius Phalereus; and it is further notable that Diogenes Laertius includes no such work in his list of writings by that authority. That the treatise has been attributed in the past to Demetrius Phalereus was due primarily to the

evidence of the title supplied by the best and oldest manuscript—evidence, it must be confessed, of apparently a weighty kind. Yet the same manuscript also concludes with a subscription which gives “Demetrius” (without addition) as the author; and this too is highly significant. It is for instance not impossible that the shorter title was the original one, and that the amplified form was due to the conjecture of a later copyist, conscious of the importance of Demetrius Phalereus as a man of letters. Such a hypothesis would at any rate present no very great difficulties: for the attribution of works of uncertain authorship to great and familiar names has been a common practice of copyists throughout the ages. Nor must we overlook the fact that more than one of the later commentators seem to refer to “Demetrius” (without addition) as the author of the work, and in one place the implication is that he followed Dionysius of Halicarnassus in point of time. So that in view of this external evidence there would seem to be strong grounds not only for rejecting absolutely the traditional authorship but also for assigning the work to one Demetrius, who would seem to have belonged to the first century A.D. and possibly to the latter half of that century, though beyond that nothing definite can be said.

At the same time mention must also be made of an interesting conjecture that has recently been put forward, not without some degree of plausibility, concerning the identity of this Demetrius.¹ He has been identified with a Greek grammarian of that name, Demetrius of Tarsus, a friend of Plutarch's, who introduces him into one of his dialogues, and represents him as travelling home to Tarsus from Britain about A.D. 83. In Britain, it is surmised, he had been on Agricola's staff, engaged in secretarial work; and possible traces of his activities have been found at York in two bronze tablets on which the name of Demetrius the grammarian appears. In the work itself there is nothing inconsistent with this theory, while there are points that might be cited in its support; its language for instance with its elements of the Greek of Plutarch's day, or again the interest incidentally shown in letter-writing. For the

¹ See W. Rhys Roberts, *Demetrius On Style* (Loeb Cl. Lib.), pp. 272-9.

rest, Demetrius's friendship with Plutarch suggests some distinction as a man of letters; his connexion with Tarsus, whence came such rhetoricians as Archidemus and the later Hermogenes (A.D. 170), would go to account for his rhetorical interests; while his association with Rome, through Britain and other provinces, would doubtless have acquainted him with contemporary problems and possibly have induced him to interest himself in the question of style. So that on the whole there is much to be said for this ingenious theory, even if certainty at this date be not actually possible.

When we turn to the work *On Style* itself we shall find it to be comparatively simple in plan, consisting of a disquisition on its subject with special reference to certain types or classes of style. After some preliminary remarks on clauses and periods (§§ 1-35), the author proceeds with his main business to discuss in more or less systematic fashion (*a*) the elevated (*μεγαλοπρεπής*) style (§§ 38-127), (*b*) the elegant (*γλαφυρός*) style (§§ 128-89), (*c*) the plain (*ισχνός*) style (§§ 190-235), and (*d*) the forcible (*δεινός*) style (§§ 240-304). The method he employs in general is that of indicating what are the specific qualities of diction, composition (i.e. arrangement of words) and subject-matter that go to produce the various styles. And this is followed by some account of the peculiar vices to which each style is liable. Thus elevation, it is stated, is apt to degenerate into frigidity, elegance into affectation, plainness into aridity, and forcibleness into the unpleasant; and with this the ground-plan of the work may be said to be complete. Of equal interest, however, are the many digressions that characterise the work. Indeed they are sometimes more illuminating than the more formal passages, embodying as they do not a few principles of a far-reaching kind. For his basic theory Demetrius reverts to Aristotle and Theophrastus, as well as to Archidemus of Tarsus and Hermagoras, who were also indebted to those earlier authorities. His illustrations he likewise draws from the classical Greeks, from Homer and Sappho, Demosthenes and Herodotus, Plato and Aristophanes, while the whole treatment is illuminated by reasoned and picturesque explanation, and by personal touches which are the outcome of his own ex-

perience. In places, it is true, he repeats himself, and his work is uneven in execution. But altogether he presents in acceptable form not a few truths of permanent value; truths which, founded on the practice of the classical Greeks, have a bearing not only on Greek style but on the prose writing of all the ages.

In the first place it must be noticed that Demetrius puts forward no formal definition of style. This it would seem he takes for granted, assuming that for a writer to express himself logically and grammatically is not enough, but that further skill is needed for artistic expression. Hence his pre-occupation with varieties of style and with such matters as the choice and arrangement of words; a partial treatment of rhetoric for which a precedent existed in the work of Dionysius of Halicarnassus. At the same time he is alive to the fact that the essence of style is to be individual, not general. "Every form of composition", he states,¹ "is a revelation of the writer's character"; so that style after all must be regarded as a personal thing. Yet he is conscious also of the existence of guiding principles which conduce to artistic writing, and these he endeavours to expound with some amount of detail. Thus, to begin with, he discusses what he regards as the basic elements of style, that is, clauses and sentences and their proper use.² Clauses (*κῶλα*) he describes as the elements out of which prose style is generated, just as expression in verse is based on units of a metrical kind. Each clause, he adds, should constitute a complete thought or else a part of a thought complete in itself; and in length such clauses might vary considerably, provided they were neither so long as to be unwieldy, nor again so short as to produce a mincing effect. Their length in fact would be determined by the nature of the thoughts expressed, long clauses being preferred in passages of elevation, short clauses when force or intensity was aimed at. It was in combination, however, that the stylistic value of such clauses was best seen; and in accordance with the manner of their arrangement two basic kinds of sentences were said to result, i.e. the periodic and the "loose" or disjointed.³ When for instance the clauses were combined so as to produce the effect of "rounding" or concentration at the

¹ § 227.

² §§ 1-8.

³ §§ 10-21.

end, the sense being only complete when the last word of the last clause was reached, then the expression was said to be periodic (*περίοδος*) or "rounded" in kind, while the style in which such periods predominated was known as the periodic style. On the other hand, where the clauses lacked this organic structure, being apparently thrown together without mutual support, then the resulting style was known as the "loose" or disjointed style. Of the periodic manner Gorgias and Isocrates were mentioned as exponents; of the "loose" style, Herodotus and the older Greeks in general. And the distinction was further illustrated by a reference to the sister art of architecture; the clauses in the periodic style being likened to stones in a vaulted dome which support one another, those in the "loose" style to stones which form no particular structure. For the rest, Demetrius points to differences in the periods required for narrative, dialogue, and oratorical purposes; while he also makes it plain that in practice neither style in itself is sufficient, but that both should be used and thus provide an alternation of elaborate and simple expression.

After this reminder of certain elementary facts concerning style, Demetrius embarks on his main theme, which is a discussion of the types of style which constituted so many developments of these basic elements. What he has in mind are four types; three of which, the elevated, the elegant, and the plain, correspond roughly to the three types of Cicero and Dionysius of Halicarnassus. The fourth type, the forcible (*δεινός*), is possibly an addition of his own,¹ a means of emphasising not only the distinction of Demosthenes as a stylist, but also the unique quality of his style, which according to Dionysius was *δεινότης*, i.e. force, mastery, or intensity. Concerning his method of treatment something has already been said. He endeavours to make plain those characteristics of diction, word-arrangement and subject-matter that go to produce the several styles; and it is notable in the first place that he is least concerned with subject-matter, his attention being directed mainly to details of expression. What he says under this head is never-

¹ Cf. however the four types of Philodemus: elevated (*μέγα*), elegant (*γλαφυρόν*), plain (*ισχυρόν*), vehement (*ἄδρὸν*).

theless sound and suggestive. In general, he asserts the importance of subject-matter, pointing out that in a large measure it determines the nature of the style.¹ Thus both elevation and grace, he states, are sometimes inherent in the themes themselves, while forceful subject-matter conduces to a forcible style, homely subject-matter to a plain style. And in support of his position he quotes the painter Nicias who had stated that the artistic faculty was revealed by the choice of suitable subjects, and that such choice itself was part of the pictorial art. At the same time he is aware that much also depends on the treatment. New graces, he points out, may be added to gracious themes, and unpleasant themes made attractive by skilful handling; and on the other hand it was possible to treat lofty subjects in undignified and feeble fashion, of which Theopompus is quoted as an example.

It is therefore on the treatment, and more particularly on the choice of diction and its arrangement, that Demetrius concentrates; and his attention is first directed to the "elevated" style upon which he has most to say. In the first place he states² that the diction employed should consist largely of striking and unfamiliar words, distinct from the current vocabulary which was apt to be tame and unimpressive. And with this object in view all the recognised devices were to be freely employed; metaphors and compound words, new formations, figurative language, and occasional reminiscences of poetic diction. In this way, colour, vividness, and grandeur would be added, more particularly by the use of metaphors, compounds, and poetic diction; while a touch of the mysterious would be supplied by the vagueness of figurative expressions. As to their use, however, Demetrius gives a word or two of caution. Care, for instance, was to be exercised in the employment of metaphors and compounds, lest too lavish a use should result in a dithyrambic effect and the expression become far-fetched and unconvincing. Metaphors, again, were to be chosen to enhance the effect, so that those conducing to triviality were to be avoided. And while in the creation of compounds the methods in everyday use were generally to be adopted, in

¹ §§ 75-6, 133-4, 190.

² §§ 78-113.

particular, the compounding of words already compounded was to be discouraged—a practice which had latterly run to excess. Apart from all this, however, elevation, it is pointed out, is often attained by means of “composition” or the arrangement of words.¹ And Demetrius, to begin with, asserts that the periodic style best lends itself to imposing effects, noting by way of proof that if a periodic sentence be broken up its stateliness wholly vanishes. In addition, he commends the employment of words containing long syllables, particularly in the emphatic positions of a sentence, namely, the beginning and the end. For long syllables, he explains, have something in their nature that is grand and striking; and it is to Thucydides’s use of this device that he attributes in part his dignity and elevation. Then, too, he notes that similar striking effects are sometimes the result of a rugged arrangement when words hard to pronounce follow one another with a clash of letters, and when connective particles do not correspond too nicely. His main contention therefore is that smoothness and pleasing cadences form no part of the elevated style; that a certain negligence is everywhere desirable, since there is something trivial in excessive nicety; and what is trivial and commonplace fails to give the impression of power needed for the elevated style.

Concerning the “elegant” style Demetrius has less to say,² though what he says is also of interest, having reference as before mainly to the choice of diction and its arrangement. The chief characteristics of this style are described as charm and vivacity; and one of the factors in producing these graces is said to be the use of smooth and beautiful words—a matter on which he digresses at some length. At the same time, much is also attributed to “composition”; and distinctive of this style are said to be its rhythmical effects, its musical cadences (which however must not be intrusive), as well as a free use of Figures and imagery. Then there are further devices which are commended as sources of this charm, such as a pointed brevity productive of a lightness of touch, or again, the element of fine surprise that results when significant words are added un-

¹ §§ 40–74.² §§ 128–89.

expectedly at the end of a sentence. To these is also added the use of fables, proverbs, and harmless witticisms, all of which conduce to elegance of effect; and all alike are illustrated by apt quotations taken from Sappho, Plato, Xenophon, Herodotus, and the rest.

The "plain" style which is next treated¹ is said to aim primarily at clearness and simplicity. And as such it employs the language in everyday use, rejecting all unusual forms such as metaphors, compounds, coinages, and the like, which conduce to elevation. Moreover since lucidity is above all its object, it avoids all the devices of the more elaborate styles, long and involved clauses, the clashing of long vowels, the use of striking Figures, as well as the terseness that gives pleasure but also leads to obscurity. Its main qualities in short are those of vividness and persuasiveness. It adopts straightforward constructions in which words assume their natural order; it repeats connecting particles for the sake of clearness; and in general by its restraint and simple directness it gives the impression of quiet sincerity.

And lastly there is the "forcible" style,² which in not a few details is reminiscent of the "elevated" style. Among its requirements is the same forceful diction with harsh-sounding words suggestive of vigour, together with striking compounds, metaphors, and figured speech generally. As regards "composition", one of its most striking features is said to be a pregnant brevity of expression, a conciseness and obscurity suggestive of force. For what is vaguely hinted at is often more effective than what is plainly stated; and as Demetrius significantly adds, "length paralyses intensity". Apart from this the periodic structure, it is stated, will in general be found effective, particularly periods with a strongly marked close; while a succession of periods has also a cumulative force of its own. At the same time such features as antithesis or the elaborate parallelism of clauses should be studiously avoided, as giving an air of artificiality or trifling, out of keeping with the "forcible" style.

Such then in the main is Demetrius's analysis of the four styles. And while no mere summary, from which perforce

¹ §§ 190-235.

² §§ 240-304.

illustrative quotations have been omitted, can represent it adequately, yet it must be admitted that as an exposition of the laws of Greek artistic composition it is worthy of note. At the same time it may be doubted whether such a process of classification was the most fruitful method of approaching the subject. In any case all such divisions of style are more or less arbitrary and unreal; for in practice the types frequently overlap and are found together in the work of any one person. And indeed Demetrius himself makes this plain when he states that in Homer, Plato, and Herodotus there is a blend of elevation, grace, and force. A better way seemingly was originated later on by Hermogenes of Tarsus (*fl.* A.D. 179) who, disregarding particular types, attempted an exposition of the general qualities of style; and his system it was that was subsequently to be adopted. As yet, however, the "types" held the field, representing a phase in the development of rhetorical study which was not destined to be permanent; and Demetrius's work has consequently the limitations of its methods, including a somewhat pedantic treatment of a theme which did not admit of such clear-cut classification.

At the same time there is something more in Demetrius's pages than a formal disquisition on types of style by a mere rhetorical theorist. What gives to the work its living quality are the incidental remarks that light up the discussion, directing the attention to some basic principle or other in an unforgettable way. Among the more memorable of such passages are those drawn directly from Theophrastus, to which reference has already been made.¹ First, there is the statement relating to the innate beauty of words, pointing out that such beauty might reside in the form, or the sound, or the nature of the thought;² a valuable reminder of important aesthetic facts. Then, too, there is the pronouncement on the need for economy of effort and for a mode of expression that by its very restraint would set the imagination of the reader (or hearer) at work. "Not all possible points", it is stated,³ "should be punctiliously and tediously elaborated; some things should be left to the comprehension and inference of the hearer." And here again

¹ See vol. I, 157-8.

² § 173.

³ § 222 (tr. W. R. R.).

in this demand for the collaboration of the hearer (or reader), a profound principle of art was casually thrown out. Elsewhere occur allusions to other general principles such as that relating to *decorum* or fitness, upon which stress is laid throughout the work. Thus in one place it is categorically stated that fitness (*τὸ πρέπον*) must be observed whatever the subject; in other words, the style must always be appropriate, unpretentious for ordinary subjects, lofty for lofty themes.¹ And it is to the failure to observe this doctrine that many of the defects of style are attributed, whether it be frigidity or aridity, bombast or bathos, all of which are enumerated among the vices of style. In short, the idea is one that is ever present with Demetrius. "Ill-judged ingenuity in emotional passages", he adds,² "is no better than the proverbial fun at a funeral"; while an anticipation of a later neo-classical doctrine is seen in the passage where he declares that the tragic and the comic must be kept rigidly apart, since laughter is inevitably "a sworn foe" of tragedy.³ On humour and the comic, too, he has something to say in passing. Thus comedy, he points out, uses ordinary everyday words, and scorns all ornament and Figures except indeed the hyperbole;⁴ and again, he distinguishes between wit and buffoonery, the one producing pleasure and charm, the other mere laughter.⁵ Concerning the vexed question of "hiatus" he also makes a pronouncement. Taking up a middle position between the followers of Isocrates on the one hand, and those who admitted freely the clash of vowels on the other, he maintained that the true course lay between the two extremes, and that while some collisions of vowels produced a jerky and discordant style, there were others that undoubtedly had a melodious effect and were accordingly not to be ruled out in a consideration of style.⁶ Or again, there are his remarks on the part played by "usage" in questions of style; a factor which Horace had regarded as the ultimate criterion or standard (*norma loquendi*) in literary matters. By Demetrius also common usage is described as "our teacher everywhere", the universal arbiter. It confirms him for instance in his high

¹ § 120.² § 28 (tr. W. R. R.).³ § 169.⁴ §§ 164-5, 126.⁵ § 168.⁶ § 68.

estimate of metaphors;¹ it also suggests the true methods of forming compounds.² But most interesting of all are perhaps his remarks on the epistolary style and letter-writing in general;³ for these sections reveal unmistakably his psychological insight, his keen sense of literary values, and they are among the most illuminating in the whole treatise. In the first place he demands for letter-writing a plain and graceful style, a manner reminiscent of that of the dialogue, since to him a letter was none other than one side of a conversation between friends. Hence its "familiar" character, its freedom of structure, which admits of no laboured periods, no stilted or lengthy expressions, but requires rather the plain speaking consistent with friendship. At the same time, he adds, something more than the "undress" manner of conversation was needed; for frequent breaks in a sentence characteristic of conversation were inappropriate in a letter as tending to obscurity. Then, too, much would depend on the matter as well as the manner. Learned disquisitions or lengthy exhortations were said to be out of place, the only philosophy permitted being that of proverbs, "the wisdom of the people". In short, a letter, according to Demetrius,⁴ aimed at "conveying a heart's good wishes in brief"; it was "the exposition of a simple subject in simple terms". And as such its tone should vary in accordance with the person addressed; while most significant of all, it should afford also a revelation of the writer's character. "Everybody", states Demetrius,⁵ "reveals his own soul in his letters"; and in conceding that this holds true of every species of writing, he maintains that in none is the revelation as clear as it is in letters.

Such then is the contribution of Demetrius to literary criticism; and from what has been said concerning the date and the main purpose of the work, it may fairly be described as forming part of that first-century movement which had for its object the establishment of classical standards in literature. Before him Cicero, Horace, and Dionysius had written with the same object in view; and the movement was completed by "Longinus" and Quintilian. But to the sum of their activities

¹ § 86.² § 91.³ §§ 223-35.⁴ § 231 (tr. W. R. R.).⁵ § 227 (tr. W. R. R.).

Demetrius brought something of his own. His outlook is in some sense narrower, for he confines his attention to details of style; but his treatment is nevertheless original and personal. Thus it is that he revives for his generation something of the spirit of the old Attic writers, preserving much that was best in the earlier teaching and recalling to his readers many of their happier phrases and turns. His main concern, it is true, is with the niceties of Greek prose; and he succeeds in throwing light upon the finer shades of expression in Greek. Yet many of his observations have also a universal bearing; they are equally applicable to efforts in the modern languages. And of the influence of the work at the Renaissance there can be no doubt; it was familiar to scholars, and, together with Quintilian's work, it inspired in all probability many of those treatises on letter-writing of which the *Epistolica Institutio* of Justus Lipsius was perhaps the most famous example. It is therefore as a cultured and judicious critic that he figures in the history of criticism; one whose keen aesthetic taste and psychological insight enabled him to bring to light some of the general principles underlying good style; and who, in an age which had witnessed a serious decline in taste, was instrumental in directing men's attention anew to the models of earlier Greece, by holding up for their imitation the standards of classical art.

CHAPTER VI

THE NEW CRITICAL OUTLOOK AND METHODS: "LONGINUS"¹

WITH the revived interest in critical matters which had become evident during the latter half of the first century A.D., yet another and an important work must also be associated, namely, the Greek treatise of "Longinus", best known perhaps under the title of *On the Sublime* (περὶ ὑψους), though it may at once be said that the work in all probability was not due to Longinus, nor does it deal with what we understand by "the sublime". As with the works of Tacitus and Demetrius, here also there are difficulties of date and authorship to be faced before linking up the treatise with this stage of the critical development; and puzzling as are many of the questions relating to the genesis of literary works, there are few that are more complicated than those bound up with the present treatise. To the solution of those questions antiquity has little or nothing to offer. There is no mention of the work by any ancient writer; and when in 1554 Robortello first presented the work to modern readers it was as a volume previously unknown, which he attributed to a rhetorician named Dionysius Longinus. From the date of that first edition to the beginning of the nineteenth century this ascription was generally accepted. The tradition arose that the work was a production of Longinus (A.D. 213-72), that famous minister of Zenobia, Queen of Palmyra, who had been put to death by Aurelian on account of insurrection; and in regarding this picturesque figure as the author of the work all the scholars of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, both in England and France, were in agreement. In assuming this position, however, they had either tacitly ignored or glossed over the fact that the Longinus

¹ *Text and Translation: Longinus, On the Sublime*, by W. Rhys Roberts, Cambridge, 1899; by W. Hamilton Fyfe (Loeb Cl. Lib.), 1927.

Translation: by H. L. Havell, London, 1890; extracts in Saintsbury, *Loca Critici*, pp. 41-53, London, 1903; also in J. D. Denniston, *Greek Literary Criticism*, pp. 165-95, London, 1924.

in question had been named not Dionysius but Cassius Longinus; and it was left for the closer scrutiny of the extant MSS. in the nineteenth century to challenge the assumption and to present fresh considerations bearing on the question of authorship.

Of the MSS.¹ (eleven in number) the oldest and incomparably the best is the Paris MS. 2036. It belongs to the tenth century, whereas the rest all date from the fifteenth or sixteenth century; and since in all probability it is the original from which the other MSS. were copied, its value in general is of the first importance. On the question of authorship, however, its evidence is curiously perplexing. In the table of contents of the MS. the treatise is ascribed to Dionysius *or* Longinus; whereas in the superscription of the treatise itself the two names are given as one, with a considerable space between them. So that the choice may be said to lie between Dionysius or Longinus or Dionysius Longinus. And in the later Paris MS. 985 these statements are merely repeated in identical form. Nor is further information forthcoming from the other MSS. In the Vatican MS. 285, for instance, the inscription once again runs "Dionysius or Longinus", while in the Florence MS. the work is simply ascribed to an anonymous writer. This much therefore becomes clear: that from the point of view of evidence the earliest MS. is the only one that counts, the others merely copying or commenting on statements previously made. As for the significance of the statements contained in the original Paris MS. all that can be said is that their conflicting character wholly discounts their value and suggests that they are almost certainly conjectures on the part of the copyist. Faced with the task of copying an anonymous work he ventured to suggest alternatively what seemed to be likely authors. And to him the name of Dionysius of Halicarnassus would naturally suggest itself in view of the author's claim to have written on "the arrangement of words";² whereas Longinus was also doubtless familiar as an interesting historical figure who had won some

¹ For a full discussion of the MSS. and authorship see W. Rhys Roberts, *Longinus, On the Sublime*, Intro. pp. 3 ff.

² c. 39, *ad init.*

reputation in the field of rhetoric. Neither, however, for reasons to be stated later, can have been the author; while the third name to appear, that of Dionysius Longinus, may well have been the result of the scribal omission of "or" (η), unless indeed it stand for some otherwise unknown writer, in which case the conflicting testimony of the table of contents has to be taken into account. Altogether then it must be confessed that the evidence of the MSS. does not take us far; it is most probably conjectural, and confused conjecture at that.

For safer ground on which to discuss the genesis of the treatise we must turn to the work itself; though it may at once be said that no further positive information as to the authorship will be forthcoming. At the same time some idea of the approximate date may reasonably be formed; and in the first place the evidence all points, consistently and fairly conclusively, to a date of writing prior to the traditional date, which was that of the third century A.D. It is not without its significance, to begin with, that while the treatise has references to all sorts of writers from Homer down to rhetoricians of the Augustan age, there is no mention whatsoever of any writer later than the early part of the first century A.D. The presence of these Augustan references, it is true, gives positive assurance as to the late appearance of the work in Greek literary history. It cannot have been earlier than the first century A.D.; and with this the evidence of its style and vocabulary, in some ways akin to those of Plutarch in his early work, is in general accord. But what is one to say about the absence of references later than the first century A.D.? In connexion with a writer of the third century it could only be described as, to say the least, surprising. But when the writer in question is one, as the author undoubtedly is, whose range in literature is otherwise catholic and whose immediate interests are betrayed by the fire and urgency of his writing, then the omission seems capable of no rational explanation, and we are forced to question seriously the hypothesis of a third-century author. There is here at least a case for accepting the traditional date with some amount of reserve. Nor are we reassured when we refer to what is known of rhetorical activities in the third century. There is of course the

outstanding figure of Cassius Longinus,¹ in whose work, the *Philological Discourses*, some coincidences of doctrine with the present treatise have latterly been traced. But apart from this there is nothing to show that Longinus was the author, while there is much to suggest a negative conclusion. Thus the absence of the work from the accredited list of Longinus's writings; the absence, too, from the same list, of works definitely claimed by the author of the treatise;² or again, the marked differences in style, terminology, and literary judgments between the known work of Longinus and the present treatise; all these are serious obstacles to the acceptance of Longinian authorship. The truth indeed would seem to be that the surprise affected by the historian Gibbon was only too well founded, when in reflecting on the age in which Longinus lived, "an age which produced scarce any other writer worthy of the attention of posterity, when real learning was almost extinct, (and) Philosophy sunk down to the quibbles of Grammarians and the tricks of mountebanks", he proceeded to express his amazement that "at such a period, in the heart of Syria, and at the court of an Eastern monarch, Longinus should (have) produced a work worthy of the best and freest days at Athens".³ But this antecedent improbability applies with equal force to other rhetoricians of the period, when sophistry was engaging the attention of all, and when the study of rhetoric had fallen somewhat from its former high estate. It is in short upon the hypothesis of Longinian authorship that the ascription of the work to the third century mainly rests; and in the absence of more substantial evidence in favour of Longinus there is little to be said for regarding the work as a third-century production.

Results of a more positive kind are obtained when we assume, and assume naturally enough, that the limitation of references in the body of the work to first-century and earlier authors was simply due to the fact that the work was written in the course of that century. That this is no idle assumption is suggested in the first place by the purpose and nature of the work. It was a treatise written confessedly⁴ to correct the errors

¹ See W. Rhys Roberts, *op. cit.* pp. 245-6.

³ E. Gibbon, *Journal* (Sept. 11, 1762).

² c. 39, 1.

⁴ c. 1, 1.

of an essay on the same subject by Caecilius, the friend of Dionysius of Halicarnassus; and from the vital and forceful character of the treatment we are led to infer that it represents more probably a first-century polemic than a detached and academic utterance of some later writer to whom Caecilius was merely an influence of the distant past. And in this view we are encouraged by the reference in the text to Theodorus of Gadara,¹ couched as it is in terms suggesting discipleship on the part of the writer; and further, by the attitude adopted by our author, in which it is not altogether fanciful to see the hostility of a follower of Theodorus for one who belonged to the rival school of Apollodorus. The quarrel between the two schools lasted throughout the first century A.D. and was representative of two distinct tendencies in rhetorical work. And since our author confessedly aims at a freer, less doctrinaire treatment, as opposed to the more rigid system of classifications and rules, it is difficult not to see here the workings of first-century influences and the adoption by the writer of the Theodoran point of view. But however this may be, and at least it is not improbable, there can be little doubt as to the nature of the interests reflected in the work; and that they are characteristic of the first century A.D. and no other is seen from a comparison of the matters treated with the questions raised by the main body of critics belonging to that century. Thus, to begin with, there are two definite references in the text to contemporary oratory, one alluding in withering terms to those "fine fellows",² the orators of the day, the other declaring that the pursuit of novelty in expression was the prevailing craze of the author's own age.³ The inevitable result of such a fashion, so the author explained, was to give rise to improprieties of style such as bombast, puerility, misplaced emotion and the like;⁴ and from what he says of the high-flown manner, the learned trifling, the unseasonable and empty passion, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that what he had in mind were the excesses of the Asiatics and the Atticists, more especially as Hegesias, the first of the Asiatics, is mentioned in connexion with one of these faults. But these are precisely the abuses censured by most of

¹ c. 3, 5.² c. 15, 8.³ c. 5, 1.⁴ cc. 3-4.

the first-century critics, by Dionysius and Caecilius, the elder Seneca, Persius and Tacitus, each in his own way. And if, unlike most of the other critics, our author does not draw his illustrations from contemporary performers, that was because he was concerned primarily with Greek and Greek authors and thus ignored with one exception all Latin writers. Still more convincing in its implications is the inquiry made at the end of the treatise¹ into the causes of the decline of eloquence; for here undoubtedly is a question that was agitating the minds of all first-century critics alike. Similar speculations have already been traced in the writings of the two Senecas, Petronius, Tacitus, and Velleius Paterculus; and to these discussions later contributions were to be made by Quintilian and the younger Pliny. The matter was thus obviously a burning question of the time; it excited no curiosity after the close of the first century A.D., if we may judge from later writings. So that this much seems certain, that the environment amidst which our treatise was written was that of Rome in the first century A.D., and that the author wrote with contemporary interests and problems in mind. Nor is this all, for his treatment of this question has much in common with that of Tacitus in his *Dialogue*. Like Tacitus, for instance, our author takes into account political factors; and in reply to the theory that great oratory had vanished with the loss of democratic freedom, he enlarges, as Tacitus had done, on the advantages enjoyed by those who lived under a beneficent Imperial government.² In both cases, it would seem, the argument was inspired by the prosperity and peace which returned under Imperial rule, probably under Vespasian and Titus; while in the discussion itself it is not unlikely that we have an echo of a controversy of the time. In the reign of Vespasian, for instance, the praise of Republican institutions had become fashionable among a certain group of philosophers who claimed to see in the decay of oratory a confirmation of their theories; and this is the position that both Tacitus and our author assailed. Their conclusions differed somewhat, but they had one object in common; and in this connexion it is not without its significance that the case

¹ c. 44.

² c. 44, 10, *passim*. See also pp. 183, 193 *supra*.

for the opposition in our treatise is put into the mouth of a philosopher. Altogether, then, it must be conceded that the evidence for a first-century authorship is strong. There is nothing in the work to confute the theory, while further details might be quoted in its support. Indeed most scholars nowadays agree in accepting this position; and if a more exact date is to be hazarded, the work might reasonably be regarded as contemporaneous with Tacitus's *Dialogue*, and thus assigned to some such date as c. A.D. 80. Who the author was, on the other hand, must remain uncertain; though many conjectures have in the past been made, including among others the names of Dionysius of Halicarnassus and Plutarch. But Dionysius is ruled out by considerations of date and by the attack on Caecilius; while with all his merits as a critic his work lacks the unique qualities of the present treatise. And as for Plutarch, the evidence is so weak and unconvincing that the theory of his authorship is no longer seriously maintained.¹ Hence the work is best described as the production of an anonymous writer of the latter half of the first century A.D., probably one of those Greeks who migrated to Rome under Augustus or one of his successors. And if nowadays the traditional authorship with some difference is usually retained and the work assigned to one "Longinus", this at least is convenient owing to the long association of the name of Longinus with the work; while in addition there is this to be said, that the name "Longinus" will do as well as any other to stand for the unknown.

(With this then as our conception of the genesis of the work *On the Sublime*, we turn now to consider the nature of its achievement and its value as a contribution to the critical literature of antiquity. Of the original treatise it must first be said that only an imperfect copy has come down. Frequent and sometimes extensive gaps occur in the MSS. amounting, it has been calculated, to more than one-third of the whole; so that what we have is a part only of the actual work, and that in a mutilated form that in places lacks coherence. At the same time sufficient has been preserved to make plain the broad outline and the intention of the author; and while much that was valuable has

¹ See W. Rhys Roberts, *op. cit.* p. 17.

undoubtedly perished, there is still an abundance of good things in the treatise as it stands, enough to warrant its inclusion among the choicest pieces of criticism that have reached posterity. Concerning the immediate occasion of the work something has already been said. "Longinus", we gather, had embarked on the task in view of what he regarded as the inadequacy of Caecilius's essay on the same theme. The earlier teacher, he complained, had failed to deal with the essential aspects of his subject, and at the same time had not been sufficiently practical in his treatment.¹ He had for instance omitted to treat of emotion, one of the primary causes of "the sublime";² and while incidentally he had dealt with such details as the number of metaphors permitted in a given passage,³ he had also betrayed a preference for the faultless Lysias, as compared with the less correct but more gifted Plato.⁴ But while the defects of an earlier text-book apparently supplied the immediate occasion for "Longinus's" treatise, it is also quite possible that the real inspiration may have been due to another and a more general cause. Written at a time when efforts were being made to attain distinction of style at all costs, efforts which resulted in all kinds of improprieties, the grandiose, the discordant, and the bizarre, the work of "Longinus" can scarcely have been independent of such conditions, a treatise written as it were *in vacuo*. And indeed, if we may judge from the nature of the work itself, this was precisely the situation he was endeavouring to meet. That his subject (*τὸ ὑψὸς*) is not "the sublime" in the narrow modern sense of the term is a truth that becomes evident from the most cursory reading. In his survey, for instance, are included not only the "sublime" Pindar and Aeschylus but also Herodotus and Thucydides, in connexion with whom the term would be simply unmeaning. The fact therefore is that "sublimity" in its modern sense is not wide enough to cover his treatment. What he has in mind is rather "elevation", all that raises style above the ordinary and gives to it distinction in its widest and truest sense;⁵ and

¹ c. 1, 1.

² c. 8, 1.

³ c. 32, 1.

⁴ c. 32, 8.

⁵ It is not without its interest to note that both Wordsworth and De Quincey were clear as to the true significance of the treatise. Thus Words-

sound ideas on this subject were what the age most needed, as was shown by the efforts of Tacitus directed to the same end. Hence the work has all the appearance of a treatise written to meet a pressing need of the time; and a proper apprehension of this fact gives to the reading of the text a fuller and deeper meaning.

As regards its structure and general treatment the work may be said to have much to commend it in spite of what seems at first sight its somewhat formless arrangement. Like so many of the critical writings that appeared at the time, the treatise in the first place is addressed to one who was certainly a friend, and possibly a pupil, one Terentianus, in all probability a cultured Roman, of whose identity however nothing is definitely known. Apart from this conventional detail, however, the structure is mainly determined by the object in view, and in spite of omissions it must be described as well planned and adequate. First comes an introduction (cc. 1-6) leading up to the central theme by a discussion of those vices of style which constituted in contemporary oratory a false "sublime"; a topic to which the author reverts later in cc. 41-3. This is followed by a section (cc. 7-40) representing the main substance of the treatise, in which are specified the five sources whence springs true distinction of style, as well as the details of the treatment necessary for its attainment. The five sources are said to be: (1) grandeur of conception, treated in cc. 8-15; (2) intensity of emotion, the consideration of which is reserved for a separate work; and both of these, as the author points out, are largely the fruit of natural genius. Then follows some account of the remaining sources due primarily to art: (3) the appropriate use of Figures, dealt with in cc. 16-29; (4) nobility of diction, in cc. 30-8; (5) dignity and elevation of word-order, in cc. 39-40. And the work is brought to a close by a discussion of the causes

worth is surprised that its theme should ever have been mistaken: "ὕψους", he points out, "when translated 'sublimity' deceives the English reader by substituting an etymology for a translation" (*Letters of the Wordsworth Family*, ed. Knight (1825), vol. II, p. 250). De Quincey also defined ὕψος as equivalent to "elevation", adding that "the Grecians had apparently no word for 'the sublime', unless it were that which they meant by τὸ σεμνόν" (De Quincey, "On Milton", *Blackwood*, Dec. 1839).

of the decay of eloquence (c. 44), a return to the opening theme which rounds off the treatment and suggests the motive that has been animating the author throughout. The general plan is therefore obvious. The central theme is treated on comprehensive lines, embodying an approach to the subject from both the psychological and the technical points of view; while something of the usual rhetorical procedure is also adopted in treating first of subject-matter (*inventio*) and its arrangement (*dispositio*) under the head of "grandeur of conception", and then of the choice and arrangement of words (*elocutio*, *compositio*) in subsequent sections. At the same time the treatment is never rigidly systematic; though the author, in his care to avoid the mistake of Caecilius, never fails to indicate how the qualities he advocates may in practice be attained. Throughout the work, moreover, an easy conversational tone is maintained, rising at times to an appropriate eloquence. And by means of an abundance of illustrative quotations, by his shrewd and convincing analysis of literary qualities, the author succeeds in calling attention to some of the fundamental principles underlying all good writing, while commending them to his readers by the freshness and charm of his style.

In attempting now to form some estimate of the teaching of "Longinus", it is as well to recall once again what we conceive to be the purpose of the work; that it was no abstract or detached inquiry into a rare yet valuable literary quality, but rather a definite and practical effort to grapple with those excesses of style which were notoriously prevalent among first-century orators and writers, and which formed the staple of discussion among the critics of the age. That the author achieves more than this will be readily conceded. In pointing out a better way in matters of style he directs attention to not a few of the great simple truths of literature, and at the same time throws new light on critical standards and methods. These things, it must be confessed, form the glory of the work; they are what has given it its value in the eyes of posterity. But nevertheless, viewed historically, the treatise is first and foremost an attempt at solving a contemporary problem; and since it is only when it is regarded as such that its meaning becomes

fully intelligible, some consideration must first be given to that aspect of the author's achievement.

In the first place there can be little doubt as to the nature of the indictment he brings against the orators and men of letters of his time. Without being laboured it is fairly comprehensive, embracing most of the characteristic vices; and if the evils are alluded to somewhat lightly rather than dealt with in detail, that is because Terentianus, to whom he was writing, would be familiar with the condition of things. Thus he recalls the bombastic manner of the Asiatics, high-flown and turgid,¹ the "puerility" of the Atticists, which "beginning in learned trifling ends in frigidity";² or again, the impassioned style used out of season,³ the indulgence in strange and absurd conceits,⁴ the over-rhythmical style suggestive of dance music,⁵ undue conciseness and undue prolixity,⁶ as well as the use of sordid or vulgar words lacking in dignity⁷—all of which were characteristic of first-century innovators and were the features of style decried by all contemporary critics. By way of comment on these improprieties "Longinus" is content with but few though pertinent remarks. Like Horace he is conscious of that human weakness which urges men in avoiding one fault to fall into the opposite extreme.⁸ And the prevailing bombast he ascribes in part to that particular cause: to the effort on the part of writers to escape the charge of being trite or colourless. Then, too, he explains that all such excesses really arose out of the quest for novelty, then a popular craze, but in itself no bad thing.⁹ "Our merits and our defects", he adds, "spring from much the same sources"; and in this sympathetic attitude, this unwillingness to condemn outright the lawless innovations of the time, may be found a suggestive parallel with the position taken up by Tacitus on this same question.

Upon this negative side of his subject, however, "Longinus" does not linger unduly. His aim is constructive and positive; what he sets out to do is to represent in its true light that excellence in expression for which so many of his contem-

¹ c. 3, 1-3.

⁴ c. 4.

⁷ c. 43.

² c. 3, 4.

⁵ c. 41.

⁸ c. 3, 3.

³ c. 3, 5.

⁶ c. 42.

⁹ c. 5, 1.

poraries were blindly and unsuccessfully groping. And he describes forthwith his conception of the real object of their mistaken quest as a certain distinction or elevation (*ὑψος*) of style present in all the earlier masterpieces, whether in prose or verse, that quality which indeed gave to them their supreme and lasting value.¹ Thus at the outset does "Longinus" establish himself firmly on the standards of the classical Greeks, and this position he maintains throughout the work. In the meantime, however, he has a word or two to add concerning the special excellence he has in mind. And in the first place he explains that the effect of this quality is not mere persuasion or pleasure, but transport (*ἔκστασις*); that is to say, it works like a charm carrying irresistibly away all hearers (or readers).² And further, he adds, its effect is as immediate as it is subtle; it does not come as the result of a painful observance of the rhetorician's rules.³ This brings him then to the question as to how this charm or "distinction" of style was in general to be come by; whether for instance it was acquired by the light of nature or whether it was the result of following the precepts of art. In reply he reiterates what Horace and others had said, namely, that both Nature and Art were equally necessary;⁴ but from the trouble he takes to establish his point it is clear that here he is indulging in no idle pronouncement. Thus he quotes the opinion of some that such skill was inborn, and came not by teaching; that indeed genius itself shrivelled up at the touch of the rules.⁵ And here it cannot be doubted that he is quoting those of his contemporaries who justified their excesses by the workings of that "divine frenzy" (*plena deo*) of which Gallio was wont to prate;⁶ those, in short, who wrote "without the guidance of knowledge... and at the whim of mere impulse and ignorant audacity".⁷ Hence to such he replies that while Nature works freely in matters of expression, she does not work haphazard or wholly without system; but that she herself creates the system which Art merely brings to light.⁸ To Art, therefore, "Longinus" attaches a twofold function. In the first place it provides a safeguard against undue licence, and in the

¹ c. 1, 3.

² c. 1, 4.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ c. 2.

⁵ c. 2, 1.

⁶ Seneca, *Suas.* III, 7.

⁷ c. 2, 2.

⁸ See p. 263 *infra*.

second, it makes plain to men Nature's methods of expression. "Fine writing", says "Longinus",¹ "needs the curb as well as the spur"; and in this saying is happily summed up his conception of the importance of Art.

These preliminaries completed, "Longinus" now comes to grips with what is his real subject; and he proceeds with many a digression to suggest how this "distinction" of style may be in general attained. In the first place he insists on the need for grandeur of conception (*ἀδρεπήβολος*); since thoughts that are lofty and awe-inspiring find their natural expression in exalted phrase. Such loftiness of thought, he grants, is normally a gift of nature rather than a quality acquired; and he quotes in this connexion an earlier dictum of his own, that "great utterance is the echo of greatness of soul" (*ὑψος μεγαλοφροσύνης ἀπήχημα*)²—one of those pronouncements of which we could wish for more. At the same time he maintains that this nobility of soul may in some measure also be cultivated by nourishing the mind on thoughts that are elevating, and impregnating them, as it were, with lofty inspiration. In any case loftiness of utterance, he adds, can never be inspired by mean or ignoble thoughts; and he proceeds to illustrate his point by examples taken from Homer and elsewhere. But while this elevation of style is primarily inspired by exalted thought, whether innate or cultivated, "Longinus" further intimates that such grandeur of conception and the consequent largeness of utterance might also be attained by submitting to the spell of the great masters (*μεγάλων συγγραφέων καὶ ποιητῶν μίμησις τε καὶ ζήλωσις*), and capturing from them something of their greatness;³ a doctrine, it might be added, that has been subject to misrepresentation in the past. That "Longinus" has here in mind a process of the spirit, rather than a mere formal imitation or emulation of their methods, is made plain by the context. For there he explains that men catch fire from the spirit of others, just as the Pythian priestess was moved to deliver her oracles by virtue of the divine vapour which arose out of the rocky floor of her chamber at Delphi. And so, adds "Longinus", it is with men; they are inspired by the effluences (*ἀπόρροιαί*) that flow from such

¹ c. 2, 2.² c. 9, 2.³ c. 13, 2.

masters as Homer, and thus uplifted, they share in the afflatus of genius.¹ Nor is the process, he declares, one of mere plagiarism; for the effect is like that produced by impressions made of beautiful forms of statuary which fire men to emulation. And here he would seem to have in mind that enthusiastic form of imitation which Dionysius of Halicarnassus had previously described as "an activity of the soul inspired by the spectacle of the seemingly beautiful".² In any event the "imitation" he here advocates is worlds apart from the formal copying usually associated with that term; it is different, too, from Horace's rather loftier conception which stood for an assimilation of ancient methods with a view to producing something new. To "Longinus" the operation is one that aimed at capturing something of the ancient spirit, something of that vital creative force which had gone to the making of the earlier masterpieces; and its effect he describes as that of illumination, guiding the mind in some mysterious way to the lofty standards of the ideal.³ Here then is something new in the critical outlook; a recognition of that imaginative stimulus derived from great creative genius, as well as an interpretation of "imitation" that raised it to a higher plane. And it is such theorising as this that constitutes the greatness of "Longinus". Of the remaining methods of attaining grandeur of conception and through it distinction of style, as mentioned by "Longinus", there is rather less to say, though they are by no means unimportant. They relate for the most part to the treatment of material, and are concerned with the ways of rendering subject-matter effective. Thus the desired effect, it is stated, may be obtained by the choice and combination of significant details so as to present an organic whole;⁴ a process which is illustrated from Sappho and Homer. It may also result from "amplification",⁵ that is, from an accumulation of all the different aspects

¹ c. 13, 2.

² See p. 112 *supra*.

³ c. 13, 1. Dryden interpreted this passage correctly in his *Preface to Troilus and Cressida* when he stated that "those great men whom we propose to ourselves as patterns of our imitation, serve us as a torch, which is lifted up before us, to enlighten our passage and often elevate our thoughts as high as the conception we have of our author's genius" (Ker, *Essays of Dryden*, I, 206).

⁴ c. 10.

⁵ cc. 11-12.

of a given subject, which by their very profusion suggest overwhelming strength and magnitude; a feature seen in the work of Demosthenes and Cicero. And lastly there is the use of vivid and compelling images which infuse vehemence and passion into the spoken or written word;¹ an effect that is illustrated from Homer, Euripides, and others.

Such then is "Longinus's" analysis of the part played by grandeur of conception in giving distinction to style: and in view of the penetration displayed in that analysis it is all the more to be regretted that his ideas on what he regards as another prime factor, namely, vehement and inspired passion, have unfortunately been lost. Beyond asserting that nothing conduces more to loftiness of tone than genuine emotion in writing, "Longinus" does not deal with the topic. And whereas at the end of the present work he states his intention of devoting a separate treatise to the subject, of the outcome of this intention nothing is known. In proceeding then with his exposition of the methods of attaining the desired excellence of style, "Longinus" now turns to a consideration of those artistic devices which contribute to that end; and in the first place he deals with the use of Figures, selecting for treatment those which more especially were adapted for his purpose. Here at first sight he seems to be reverting to the usual rhetorical routine which comprised instruction in the choice and arrangement of words, and then in what was known as stylistic ornament, including the Figures. But while in his treatment there is much that is conventional, there are also signs of independent thinking, and of discrimination in the handling of his various details. It is not without its significance, for instance, that he reverses the usual order of treatment and devotes his attention primarily to a consideration of the Figures. This may possibly be accounted for by the fact that he,² as well as Dionysius, had already written on "the arrangement of words", so that a further detailed treatment of the subject was unnecessary; though other reasons may also have weighed with him, reasons to which reference will be made later.³ What at any rate is certain is that he devotes nearly

¹ c. 15.² c. 39, *ad int.*³ See p. 229 *infra*.

one-third of the work as it stands (cc. 16-29) to a consideration of the Figures; and it is therefore not strange to find that to them he attaches considerable value as a means of giving "distinction" to style.

From the first he makes it plain that to him Figures are no arbitrary devices invented by rhetoricians for mechanical application; but rather a natural means of giving to style an element of fine surprise, something rooted in genuine emotion, responsive to the artistic sense of man, and thus capable of explanation in terms of human nature. This idea, by the way, is implicit throughout his teaching; and he begins by showing how natural and intimate are the relations between Figures and "distinction" of style, the one assisting and being in turn assisted by the other.¹ Thus he explains that while Figures are instrumental in giving excellence to style, there is nothing on the other hand that renders Figures more effective than a style that is already in some degree "elevated". In the use of Figures, he points out, there is normally a suggestion of artifice which excites mistrust in the minds of the hearers (or readers), often rendering them hostile to the effects intended. And in countering this suspicion there is no surer antidote than elevation of style, which by its very qualities casts a veil over artifice, just as dim lights are extinguished in the radiance of the sun. As he acutely adds, "a Figure is most effective when the fact that it is a Figure is happily concealed";² and this function, he maintains, is best performed by a setting that is the result of splendour or "distinction" of style.

When he turns to consider more particularly the effects of Figures, it will be noticed that he makes no attempt to deal with the Figures as a whole. As has been already said, he discusses only those that give elevation to style; and he is content to illustrate the general principles of their workings together with some of their effects, selecting for that purpose examples taken from Demosthenes, Thucydides, Homer and the rest. Among the more familiar of the Figures treated are the rhetorical question, Asyndeton or the omission of conjunctions, Hyperbaton or inversion, and Periphrasis; and his

¹ c. 17.

² c. 17, 1.

main contention throughout is that Figures properly treated are a valuable means of giving emotional quality to style, thus supplementing by devices of art the animation or ardour which normally results from the genuine emotion of the speaker (or writer). In the first place, for instance, he illustrates from a passage of Demosthenes his effective use of question and answer; and then goes on to explain how by the rapid play of question and answer, anticipating as it were the questions of his hearers, Demosthenes has simulated a natural outburst of passion and given to his statement a vigour and a fire which would have been lacking in a plain straightforward assertion.¹ And similar effects are said to result from the use of Asyndeton, when words are poured forth without connecting links, as for example in the passage taken from Xenophon: "Locking their shields, they thrust, fought, slew, fell".² Here, it is explained, the broken but rapid expression suggests an agitation of spirit which checks the utterance and yet at the same time drives it on; an effect, it is noted, of which Homer made use. But this device, it is added, may also be combined with others such as Anaphora (or repetition of words), when the effect is heightened, as in the phrase: "by his manner, his looks, his voice, *etc.*".³ The essence of such breaks and repetitions is said to be the suggestion of an impassioned disorder and emphasis that strike the minds of the hearers (or readers) as with a swift succession of blows, while betokening a disturbance of soul on the part of the speaker. And for the better appreciation of these effects "Longinus" advises that such passages be turned into the style characteristic of Isocrates and his school, that is, with all the connectives restored and the repetitions removed. It would then be seen that, with order and smoothness attained, all the force and impetuosity of the passages had vanished. For, added "Longinus" in his illuminating fashion, just as runners were impeded by bands that cramped their movement, so impassioned utterance was fettered by such things as connectives which deprived it of its freedom and rapidity of expression.⁴

Much the same in their effects were said to be the Figures known as Hyperbata (or inversions), which consisted of de-

¹ c. 18;² c. 19, 1.³ c. 20, 1.⁴ c. 21, 2.

partures from the normal order in both expression and idea; a sure and certain sign of utterance made under stress of great emotion. For, as "Longinus" proceeds to point out,¹ men moved by passion are wont to express themselves in disjointed fashion, skipping from subject to subject, indulging in irrelevancies, rapidly turning now this way now that, thus setting at defiance by their unexpected movements the recognised laws of normal and logical speech. Of this he gives an example from Herodotus; while to Thucydides he attributes the greatest skill and boldness in the use of such transitions. Demosthenes, too, he describes as abounding most of all writers in the use of this Figure, even though he employs it in a less daring manner than did Thucydides. And then in his comment on the effects of this Figure in composition "Longinus" supplies a practical and striking illustration of the very qualities with which he is dealing. Thus Demosthenes, he states, "will often leave in suspense the thought which he has begun to express, and meanwhile he will heap, into a position seemingly alien and unnatural, one thing upon another parenthetically and from any external source whatsoever, throwing his hearer into alarm lest the whole structure of his words should fall to pieces, and compelling him in anxious sympathy to share the peril of the speaker; and then unexpectedly, after a long interval, he adds the long-awaited conclusion at the right place, namely the end, and produces a far greater effect by this very use, so bold and hazardous, of Hyperbaton".² Here, then, may be detected something of the breathless vehemence, the studied disorder, and the air of unpremeditation characteristic of impassioned utterance, but largely due in this instance to the employment of one of the Figures. It is in short an example of artistic expression reproducing the effects of natural expression; a principle emphasised by "Longinus" in his statement that "art is perfect when it seems to be nature, and nature hits the mark when she contains art hidden within her".³

Among the other Figures treated by "Longinus" are the Apostrophe or adjuration, the Figures embodying changes of syntax, and lastly Periphrasis; all of which are said to be

¹ c. 22, 1.

² c. 22, 4 (tr. W. R. R.).

³ c. 22, 1.

instrumental in heightening the expression. The use of the Apostrophe in the first place he illustrates from the work of Demosthenes. He explains how that orator, in defending his policy which had brought disaster at Chaeronea, reverts to past history, and in recalling the policy which had prevailed at Marathon, swears by those earlier champions as though they were gods; thus raising the argument to the emotional plane and carrying away his hearers by the very force of his passion.¹ Then, too, he points out the enlivening effects of variations of syntax; the use of the plural for the singular, or the singular for the plural, or again, the representation of things past as though they were present. The first he illustrates by the sentence, "a countless host...were clamouring"; and here he suggests that the plural verb (*κελάδησαν*), besides being more sonorous, also conveys more effectively the sense of multitude contained in the word "host".² The second he illustrates by Demosthenes's phrase, "all Peloponnesus was at variance"; and here he maintains that the excellence arises from the effective way in which the sense of oneness is brought out by the singular verb.³ And again, the representation of things past as present he commends as giving vividness to a narrative; "your story", he explains,⁴ "is then no longer a narration but an actuality". Of greater interest, however, are his remarks on Periphrasis with which he concludes his treatment of Figures. That Periphrasis has a heightening effect on expression he states as a generally recognised fact.⁵ By its very magniloquence, provided it is free from bombastic or discordant elements, it adds to expression a richer note and more tuneful rhythms, thus affording assistance to one who is endeavouring to set forth some lofty thought. And "Longinus" likens its effects to those musical accompaniments which help to bring out the charm of a melody. On the other hand he adds that its use is attended with considerable risk and needs much care; for otherwise it falls flat and is apt to degenerate into a trivial and cumbrous form of expression⁶—a truth that was subsequently to be borne out by certain aspects of English poetry in the eighteenth century.

¹ c. 16.² c. 23, 2.³ c. 24, 1.⁴ c. 25.⁵ c. 28.⁶ c. 29.

From what has now been said of the nature and scope of "Longinus's" treatment of the Figures it becomes clear that unlike most of the contemporary rhetoricians he attempts no mere enumeration of their different varieties, but aims rather at establishing the general idea of their function and at illustrating his teaching by some selected examples. Moreover, by way of inculcating a more intelligent use of such devices, he explains where possible the psychological basis on which they rested; while more than once he lays stress on the need for their proper handling. Nor does he confine himself to caveats of merely a general kind. His exposition throughout is characterised by warnings of which the injunction as to *Periphrasis* is but one example. Thus he insists that Figures are not to be used indiscriminately. "The place, the manner, the circumstances, and the motive",¹ he explains, must all be taken into account; and in particular, the device of *Repetition* or accumulation must only be used where the occasion or subject invites inflation, redundancy, exaggeration or passion.² Then, too, he points out that in employing a Figure the orator (or writer) should exercise sobriety and judgment; "in the midst of the riot of the imagination", as he puts it, "restraint is necessary".³ Again, he adds that the exhibition of passion is most effective when it seems to be unstudied on the part of the speaker and to arise naturally out of the occasion itself.⁴ Such remarks as these are not without their significance in a treatise of the first century A.D. That they are designed to combat the prevailing faults of contemporary orators and writers would perhaps be generally conceded; but they also seem to do more than this. They seem also to account in part for the prominence given by "Longinus" to the discussion of Figures in his work. It is, in short, as if in his opinion it was the perverted ingenuity bound up with the abuse of Figures that lay at the root of the stylistic improprieties of the time, and that therefore called most urgently for serious consideration.

However this may be, at the same time it is clear that questions relating to the Figures do not occupy the whole attention of our author. And in developing further his main

¹ c. 16, 3.

² c. 23, 4.

³ c. 16, 4.

⁴ c. 18, 2.

thesis he proceeds to discuss yet another factor that contributes to "distinction" of style, namely, words themselves. Of this discussion on diction, unfortunately, only a mutilated section has come down, no less than four leaves of the MS. having been lost; though what remains is characterised by the same discerning treatment as before. In the first place he is content to remind his readers of the importance of a suitable choice of both ordinary and striking words in the formation of an impressive style. He does not labour the point unnecessarily; but by means of a brief comment on what after all was a commonplace to his generation he presents the ancient doctrine in a new and memorable light. Dionysius of Halicarnassus, for one, had previously remarked on the innate beauty of words; he had discussed them mainly in terms of form and sound-quality, apart from their meaning. "Longinus", however, now insists on their magic as a means of expression, a beauty intimately bound up with the thought itself. And he declares that what gives to literature its enduring charm, whether it be the quality of grandeur, or beauty, or mellowness, or force, is in the last resort this verbal magic, which "invests dead things with a sort of living voice". "Beautiful words", he adds,¹ "are in truth the very light (or illumination) of thought" (*φῶς γὰρ τῇ ὄντι ἴδιον τοῦ νοῦ τὰ καλὰ ὀνόματα*); and it may safely be said that nowhere in the work does "Longinus" approach more nearly to the mysteries of art than in this suggestive and striking pronouncement of his.

Of the rest of his fragmentary remarks on diction there is this to be said, that while scarcely maintaining the high level of his opening comment they invariably touch on points of importance to his contemporaries, and this, rather than an exhaustive treatment, is his aim throughout. Thus he issues a warning against the indiscriminate use of stately words; to employ magnificent diction, he states, in connexion with trivial matters would be about as effective as to put on a child a man's tragic mask.² On the other hand he has a word of approval for homely and racy expressions in the proper place; and he quotes by way of illustration a sentence from Theopompus to the effect

¹ c. 30, 1.² c. 30, 2.

that "Philip had a way of stomaching things" (*ἀναγκοφαγήσαι*)—a somewhat daring expression which Caecilius had previously condemned.¹ To "Longinus", however, the term "stomaching" seemed preferable to a more elegant word, and this on account of its familiarity and force. Such words, he conceded, were dangerously near vulgarity; but from that they were saved by their very expressiveness. Passing then to another aspect of diction, presumably a topic of current debate, he next deals with the use of metaphor; and here again he gives evidence of a singular breadth of outlook and of a penetrating insight into the elements of art, none too common in any age. That metaphors were a valuable factor in giving "distinction" to style he takes more or less for granted; and he proceeds as before to confute a doctrine which Caecilius had seemingly countenanced, to the effect that the number of metaphors permissible in any given passage should be limited to two or at the most three.² Behind this rule, he is aware, lay the authority of Aristotle and Theophrastus, who had advocated the use of not more than two at a time, and had further advised the employment of such saving clauses as "as it were" or "if one may venture the expression". Such disparaging phrases, he conceded, often moderated the audacity of risky metaphors, thus rendering them acceptable; though this device he regards as not the most effective, while to the mechanical limitation of their number he takes strong exception. With the insight of genius he brushes aside all rules, and, declaring that in this matter Demosthenes was the guide, he boldly asserts that the passion which gives rise to metaphors will not only determine their number but will also provide the necessary palliatives as well. Thus impassioned utterance, he explains, demands the use of these striking turns, often in a sustained series; so that there can be no fixed limit to the number used. Then, too, a reader stirred does not stop to count or weigh up metaphors; carried away by emotion he needs no other palliative. And in this way, it is implied, does passion help metaphor and metaphor passion; the relation between the two being of a natural and fundamental kind. And lastly concerning hyperboles he has also a word to

¹ c. 31, 1.

² c. 32, 1.

say, though for the most part his remarks merely reiterate principles already laid down. That hyperboles should spring naturally from great emotion which renders plausible and acceptable the most daring use, that moreover they are most effective when their art is concealed, and that a hyperbole overdone results in bathos, all these are ideas that are implied in his earlier discussion; and the true working of the device he illustrates by examples taken from Thucydides and Herodotus.¹

This brings him then to his last source of "distinction" in style, namely, the arrangement of words; and this section, for reasons already given, he treats in summary fashion. Hence, for the most part, he is content to generalise on the effects of a harmonious setting of words. He points out, for instance, that the resultant harmony is a natural instrument not only of persuasion and pleasure but of lofty emotion as well; and he further describes it as something that appeals to the soul of man, awakening in him a host of sensations, and enabling him to share in the emotion of the speaker (or writer).² Foremost among the rhythms that make for grandeur of utterance is said to be the dactylic, upon which, as "Longinus" reminds his readers, that most beautiful of metres, the hexameter, is built. On the other hand, weak and broken rhythms made up of pyrrhics, trochees, and the like, are instrumental solely in lowering the dignity of a passage.³ But so, adds "Longinus", does also writing in which the rhythm is too pronounced; for there it is the quality of the rhythm rather than the meaning of the words that engages the attention, and the effect is said to be not unlike that of dance-music to which hearers were wont to keep time with their feet.⁴ That "Longinus" has here in mind those degrading tricks of contemporary orators mentioned by Tacitus⁵ can scarcely be doubted. And in his further warning against undue conciseness of expression⁶ may be found another topical allusion. Extreme conciseness, as he points out, cramps and cripples the thought; whereas brevity in the true sense is effective because of its economy and directness.

With the conclusion of this analysis "Longinus" may be said to have completed his task, that of pointing out to his genera-

¹ c. 38. ² c. 39, 1 ff. ³ c. 41. ⁴ *Ibid.* ⁵ See p. 188 *supra*. ⁶ c. 42.

tion the foundations of a noble style. And the speculations that follow on the causes that had led to the decline of literary excellence in his day are of the nature of an appendix; an expression of views on a subject arising naturally out of his main theme. For this purpose he adopts the dialogue form, ascribing to a contemporary philosopher some of the current arguments, to which he in turn replies. The main argument advanced by the philosopher, somewhat tentatively it is true, is the orthodox political one, namely, that democracy was the foster-mother of genius, and that literature had accordingly flourished under the earlier democratic régime and had declined with the passing of those conditions.¹ In support of this view it was urged that the freedom of the individual under a democracy was what really counted. It gave scope to the imagination, filled men with high hopes, inspired them to public activities and to competition for the many prizes open under popular government; all of which was claimed to have fostered literary achievement. On the other hand it was the loss of freedom under Imperial rule that was said to account for the subsequent decline. Nurtured on doctrines of servitude and forbidden all liberty of speech, men were described as no better than slaves, with faculties stunted like those of the Pygmies; and such servitude, it was added, even though of the most benevolent kind (καὶν ἡ δικαιοσύνη), was undoubtedly fatal to all forms of literary activity.² Here then was Cicero's theory, with some modification it is true, and with also the saving clause as to the beneficence of Imperial rule. To this "Longinus" replies by approaching the problem from another angle. To him the causes of the decline were ethical rather than political; a conviction quite in keeping with his former pronouncement that "great utterance" was but the counterpart of "greatness of soul". And he proceeds to enlarge on the moral evils of his day; the love of money and pleasure with its degrading effects, the insolence and shamelessness that followed in its train, the loss of all sense of the ideal and spiritual, and the consequent atrophy of man's immortal soul.³ These in his opinion were the causes of the decay of literature; and he can suggest no remedy,

¹ c. 44, 2.

² c. 44, 5.

³ c. 44, 6-8.

save an enlightened autocracy which should exercise over men the control they lacked.

Such then in broad outline is the scheme of the treatise *On the Sublime*; and before passing on to a consideration of other aspects of the work some estimate may now be formed of the success with which the author has achieved his main purpose, that of pointing out to a distracted age the principles underlying true charm and "distinction" of style. That he has shed new light on the much-vexed question becomes evident from a comparison with the efforts made by Dionysius, Tacitus, and Demetrius in much the same field. Not that their efforts were wanting in merit; on the contrary, as has been shown, they betrayed keen insight into certain aspects of the problem, and were helpful and suggestive in a high degree. Compared however with the teachings of "Longinus" those efforts seem incomplete, tentative, and to some extent conventional; whereas "Longinus" as if by some stroke of genius has contrived to grasp the problem in its entirety, and has gone unerringly to the heart of the matter. Thus greatness of utterance, he points out, is rooted in personality. It is a fruit of the spirit, of the whole nature of man; and as such, it requires above all the play of the imagination as well as the exercise of genuine emotion, both of which are to be communicated to the hearer (or reader). "What comes from the heart goes to the heart"; this in reality is the basis on which he builds, and it represents perhaps the most valuable part of his teaching on style. In addition to this he considers the need for a knowledge of art to enable the speaker (or writer) to make a conscious and rational use of his powers. And here while retaining the old rhetorical terminology he breathes into the system a new life-giving spirit. Thus he deals with principles rather than with rules; and interpreting technique in terms of emotion he makes plain the "why" and the "wherefore" of each rhetorical device. The Figures, for instance, are to him no mechanical tricks but a natural means of appealing to human emotions; and as such, they require for their use a sense of fitness and psychological tact. This is the principle that runs through his teaching; and in this demand, together with the importance he attaches to the imaginative

and emotional aspects of style, lay the substance of his message for his generation. That the instruction was what the age most needed can scarcely be doubted; and equally certain is it that its fundamental doctrines are those which no age can safely ignore.

So far then we have been considering the primary object of the work, and the skill shown by the author in handling his main theme. And this much may at once with confidence be said, that, were there nothing more to add concerning his achievement, our author's claim to eminence as a critic would still rank very high, on account of the originality and penetration shown in his analysis of the contemporary problem. As it is, however, there is much besides that commands attention. Digressions, explanations, illustrations, and the like, incidentally supply further relevant passages in which fresh light is thrown on such matters as critical standards, critical methods and judgments. And as a consequence another aspect of the treatment may be said to emerge. The treatise, ostensibly on style, widens considerably in scope and becomes one on literary criticism in the larger sense of the term. Nothing, for instance, is of more lasting value than the remarks of our author on the standards for forming judgment in literature. It is a subject on which he has not a little to say; and such judgment he describes as an arduous business, indeed, "the crowning fruit of ripe experience" (*πολλῆς ἐστὶ πείρας τελευταίου ἐπιγένημα*).¹ To some extent it would be true to say that his standard of taste is implied in what has already been said concerning "distinction" in style; so that for him the qualities of great utterance are likewise the qualities of great literature. Hence, as his first criterion of excellence in literature, he demands the presence of an imaginative and emotional appeal; the power, that is, of uplifting the soul of the reader and of filling him with joy and pride, by arousing in him noble thoughts and suggesting more than the words actually convey.² And here, it will be noticed, the test is no longer that of mere pleasure or persuasion; nor is the appeal made to the emotions or the intellect alone. The effects are such as concern the whole nature of man; and they

¹ c. 6.

² c. 7, 2-3.

are essentially of a bracing and tonic quality. Along with this test however he combines another of equal importance, that requiring in great literature a permanence of appeal. "In general", he states,¹ "you should regard that greatness in art to be noble and genuine which appeals to all men in all ages" (ὅλως δὲ καλὰ νόμιζε ὕψη καὶ ἀληθινὰ τὰ διὰ παντὸς ἀρέσκοντα καὶ πᾶσιν); an anticipation of the later statement due to St Vincent (d. 304)² that the test of great literature was *quod semper, quod ubique, quod ab omnibus*. To this general statement of his, it is true, "Longinus" makes one qualification. By "all men" he means "men of sense, well acquainted with literature"; so that the tribunal he has in mind is neither the connoisseur nor the masses, but educated mankind in all the ages. For the rest, however, he insists on this test of time in positive fashion; and also gives reasons for the faith that is in him. When men, he argues, differing in all possible respects, in their interests, their ways of life, their tastes, ages and languages, all agree notwithstanding in the views they hold on any particular subject, then the unanimity of a tribunal otherwise so discordant is surely undeniable proof of the justice of their verdict and of the value to be attached to works thus commended.³ And with the justice of this reasoning modern readers would readily agree; for to them the best practical test of what is literature and what is not is still this power of reading and re-reading a book with undiminished delight. The fact is that "Longinus" has here called attention to one of the basic truths of literature and literary criticism, namely, the inexhaustible vitality of all great art, and its power of communicating life right down through the ages. In all great literature there are latent correspondences with human nature which time alone can reveal; and it is by virtue of this fact that the test of time, this permanence of appeal, is on the whole the soundest criterion of what constitutes greatness in literature.

With the enunciation of these principles "Longinus" may be said in some measure to have broken new ground; and in what he has further to say on the formation of literary judgment there is also much that is of interest to modern readers. More

¹ c. 7, 4.² See Sikes, *Greek View of Poetry*, p. 237.³ c. 7, 4.

than once, it is true, he reiterates his conception of posterity as the final arbiter in literary matters;¹ a tribunal, he adds, "whose judgments no jealousy can dispute".² But he has also something new to suggest when in his practical way he commends as touchstones the works of the great masters, and advises his readers in forming their judgments to consider how Homer or Plato or Demosthenes would have handled the theme.³ For such an application in concrete form of the qualities of great literature there is much to be said. It is judgment by classical standards at its simplest and best; and the method has since been familiarised by Matthew Arnold, who in a well-known passage recommended for adoption much the same procedure.⁴ Of greater importance, however, is our author's pronouncement on the value to be attached to "correctness" in estimating literary work, and the relative merits of a flawless mediocrity on the one hand, and of genuine greatness allied with some defects on the other. The question is one to which he devotes considerable attention; and the full significance of the discussion can only be appreciated in the light of contemporary conditions. That he was here debating an urgent question of the day seems highly probable, if we may judge from Caecilius's disparagement of Plato as compared with the faultless Lysias,⁵ Dionysius's reply in one of his *Letters* to the remonstrances of Gnaeus Pompeius on the same subject,⁶ or again the remarks subsequently made on the evils resulting from the craze for "correctness". By Quintilian,⁷ the younger Pliny,⁸ and others, references are made to this particular matter; and more especially to the crippling effects of over-niceness, the loss of sincerity, the dryness and tenuity produced by the excessive use of the file. And among the factors which contributed to the persistence of the doctrine there were the Atticists, pre-occupied mainly with the avoidance of faults, and again, the coteries, engaged for the most part in the meticulous correction of the compositions of their friends.⁹ So that there would seem

¹ c. 14, 3.

² c. 36, 2.

³ c. 14, 1.

⁴ *Essays in Criticism* (Second Series), p. 16.

⁵ c. 32, 8.

⁶ See pp. 110, 124 *supra*.

⁷ *Inst. Orat.* viii, Pr. 23 ff.

⁸ *Letters*, *passim*.

⁹ See A. Guillemin, "Sociétés de gens de lettres au temps de Pline" (*Rev. d'Études latines*, 1927, vol. v, pp. 261-92).

to have been in existence throughout the first century a marked tendency to give the primacy in literature to the quality of "correctness". And although Horace had declared for a more indulgent attitude to faults where excellence was also present,¹ "Longinus" himself describes the matter as one that urgently called for a decision (*ἐπικρίσεως ἐξ ἅπαντος δεόμενα*).² In any case to this question he addresses himself with enthusiasm and zest, declaring without hesitation in favour of the work of genius, even though it be not flawless, as compared with work which, correct in all its details, never succeeds in rising to the loftiest heights. For one thing, he explains,³ great flights of necessity involve great risks from which on the other hand pedestrian natures are free; so that soaring genius is often found to lose her way while moderate talent travels safely. Thus Homer, he points out, is occasionally found tripping; but is he for that reason inferior to Apollonius? Or is the neatness of Eratosthenes to be preferred to the inspiration of Archilochus, the lyric utterance of Bacchylides to that of Pindar, or the tragedies of Ion to those of Sophocles? In this impassioned way, with the help of rhetorical questions, does he excuse the lapses of genius. But he also does more than this when he advances definite reasons for his preference, explaining for instance that one touch of genius can redeem a multitude of faults, that unfailing accuracy savours somewhat of pettiness, that it is the fruit not of genius but of an observance of art, and that while such "correctness" is successful in escaping censure, it is greatness alone that compels admiration.⁴ The real gist of his argument, however, consists in the claim he makes that grandeur in literature appeals irresistibly to man, in a way that mere "correctness" can never do. Thus in man, he explains,⁵ there has been implanted a love for all that is great and more divine than himself. Even the universe itself cannot limit his thoughts which tend to range freely beyond the bounds of space. And this is why mankind is drawn to what is vast or great or beautiful in Nature, to the great waters of the Nile, the Danube or the Rhine, to the lightning flash of heaven or the fierce fires of Etna; even though in smaller streams and in flames of man's

¹ See p. 90 *supra*. ² c. 33, 1. ³ c. 33. ⁴ cc. 33, 35, *passim*. ⁵ c. 35.

own kindling there is much that is good and of service to the race. Such objects however are wont to be regarded as commonplace, admiration being reserved for the greater phenomena of Nature. And so, argues "Longinus", it is with literature. It is loftiness and grandeur that carry men away, and supply (to use Bacon's phrase)¹ that "more ample greatness" which affords satisfaction to something that lies deep in their nature. "Correctness" in a writer may indeed be described as a human virtue; but grandeur alone, adds "Longinus", can give to him something of the magnanimity of God (*μεγαλοφροσύνης θεοῦ*).²

Possessed of such views regarding the standards of literary judgments, it is not strange to find that "Longinus" in practice has also some illuminating comments to make on literature in the concrete; comments interesting, moreover, on account of the methods employed as well as for the light they throw on the writers concerned. His range in these matters is that of Greek literature, from Homer to the Alexandrians; and while he includes in his survey Greek poets and dramatists, orators and historians, he has also something to say on Cicero and Hebrew literature. What he has to offer in this kind, it is true, has certain obvious limitations. From the nature of his work his critical judgments are nearly all incidental in character, illustrative directly or indirectly of "distinction" in style; and they are therefore for the most part casual appreciations of certain aspects of the writers in question, not considered estimates of their performances as wholes. Yet within these limits his critical judgments are of outstanding quality. There had been nothing like them hitherto in the work of antiquity; and by their insight and penetration they succeed in bringing to light not a few of the finer literary qualities.

Nothing in the first place is more remarkable than the way in which he makes use of aesthetic tests in forming his judgments; as when for instance he brings to light the imaginative qualities of Homer, Sappho, and others. Of the workings of the poetic imagination—for this in modern parlance is what is implied in "grandeur of conception", the term used by "Longinus"—he gives numerous examples. Thus he quotes

¹ *Advancement of Learning*, ed. W. Aldis Wright, p. 101.

² c. 36, 1.

freely from Homer, supplying illustrations of the immensity of his ideas, his power of creating extra-natural worlds, or strange and exalted types of being, and of giving to these imaginary creations the force of reality. Typical Homeric passages to which he calls attention are those relating to the world-embracing stride of the steeds of Hera,¹ the cosmic nature of the upheaval occasioned by the battle of the gods,² the transcendent image of Poseidon under whose footsteps mountains and forests tremble,³ or again the divine heroism of Ajax praying for light, not safety, in the darkness of defeat.⁴ And as if these were not sufficient to make his point clear, he adds yet one other example, this time from the book of *Genesis*; the tremendous utterance of the Creator at the beginning of things: "Let there be light, and there was light".⁵ In each case it is the overwhelming imaginative appeal to which he calls the attention: while at the same time he does not fail to suggest the exhilarating emotional effects of such passages, which are said to be awe-inspiring in their grandeur, their beauty or terror. But similar imaginative effects are also said to result from the poet's treatment of the phenomena of life, when he selects only the most significant details, and by combining them into an organic whole, contrives to suggest a new and comprehensive vision of things. Here again the creative imagination is at work as the "realising" faculty, modifying, transforming, and producing awe-inspiring effects; and this is illustrated by "Longinus" first from Homer, and then from Sappho. In the first instance he quotes Homer's description of a storm, pointing out that a selection had been made of the most terrifying circumstances: the swift onrush of the waves lifted high and swollen by the tempest, the black overhanging clouds, the mad seas breaking and shrouding the ship in foam, the winds howling in the sails, and the sailors terror-stricken, conscious of the near approach of death.⁶ And in the second place he gives Sappho's *Ode to Anactoria*,⁷ possibly though not certainly in full, at the same time commenting on the choice of the most striking symptoms of the love passion, vehement, contradictory, and realistic, as "she

¹ c. 9, 5.² c. 9, 6.³ c. 9, 8.⁴ c. 9, 10.⁵ c. 9, 9.⁶ c. 10, 5.⁷ c. 10, 2.

glows, she chills, she raves, she reasons, now she is in tumult, now she is dying away". By way of further comment "Longinus" explains that in all things there exist by nature certain elements which constitute the essence of their being; and that it is by a happy organic combination of those elements that power and grandeur in literature are attained. To neither of these processes, it is true, does "Longinus" anywhere apply the term "imaginative"; though imagination (*φαντασία*) in general he describes as concepts of the mind, significantly adding that in his day it was usually applied to vivid and realistic representations of things, resulting from strong emotion or passion.¹ Yet no one can mistake his realisation of the workings of those "shaping fantasies" which, apprehending more than comes within the scope of cold reason, are yet able to give to "airy nothings" a seeming substance of reality; or again the effects of that synthesis of significant elements abstracted from life itself. Terminology and definition it was left for a modern age to elaborate; but the creative imagination was already active in Homer, Sappho, and the rest, and "Longinus" is the first to grasp the importance of that fact.

Less striking, though by no means devoid of interest, are his observations on the *Odyssey* which he discusses in its relation to the *Iliad*, to the disadvantage of the former. That he takes for granted the Homeric authorship of both poems is in itself significant; he at any rate is no separatist, whatever may have been the prevailing notion at the time. Between the two poems however he finds certain marked differences.² Whereas the *Iliad* is said to be full of dramatic action and conflict, treated with energy and a never-failing greatness, and in a style impassioned, supple, and packed with images drawn from actual life, the *Odyssey* on the other hand is described as lacking in most of these qualities, consisting in the main of narrative from which much of the intensity had vanished, with numerous character sketches, and a host of foolish fables of the most trifling kind. Some of these broad differences had already been noted by Aristotle; as was also the suggestion that the *Odyssey*, as distinct from the *Iliad*, had elements in its composition that

¹ c. 15, 1.

² c. 9, 11 ff.

were akin to comedy. But in commenting on these differences "Longinus" has now a new theory to offer; namely, that the *Odyssey* was of later composition than the *Iliad* and that it was a product of Homer's genius when his powers were in decline. In support of this theory he reminds his readers that in the *Odyssey* the poet is concerned with episodes that were, so to speak, fragments left over from his treatment of the Trojan war in the *Iliad*; and that, moreover, in the *Odyssey* the poet seems to be completing his earlier story by a moving tribute to heroes previously celebrated. At the same time, the arguments on which he relies are mainly aesthetic in kind. They are, the loss of the earlier fire, the increase of characterisation, and the growing fondness for story-telling even of the most incredible kind. And all alike he regards as evidence of advancing years; though he is careful to add that in speaking of old age it is the old age of Homer that he is considering. With the majority of these inferences, however, readers of to-day would find some difficulty in agreeing. It might indeed be conceded that the less vigorous and intense manner of the *Odyssey* in some measure lends colour to the theory; but that character-drawing or the indulgence in fabling was a sign of waning powers would be, and indeed has been, stoutly denied. It is true that Aristotle had held characterisation to be of but secondary importance; and since character-drawing had figured in the New Comedy as a comparatively late development, these considerations may have led "Longinus" to regard this feature as a mark of decline, and, by a false analogy, a decline associated with the later stages of a poet's development. And similarly with the view he takes of the marvellous tales, that they were trifles, not concerned with the serious business of life, and therefore a sign of decadence; this also might be described as a representative view of antiquity. Yet in the light of later experience neither of these points can be seriously maintained. And indeed "Longinus" himself, in spite of his cavils, betrays his sense of the essential greatness of the *Odyssey*; its grandeur is said to be that of the setting sun, the fanciful fables are dreams, but the dreams of Zeus. The truth would therefore seem to be either that "Longinus" is here not greatly in advance of his age, or that he is

indulging in a piece of special pleading. In any case his contention is not established, at least on the grounds adduced; though the discussion has incidentally this further interest of its own. As an attempt to view poetry in relation to its author it may be said to mark an advance in critical method; while it also affords an early if imperfect instance of that historical criticism which by means of an imaginative sympathy with the literature of the past was to yield valuable results in later ages.

More characteristic of "Longinus's" treatment and more successful in its results, however, was his use of the comparative method of criticism; of which indeed the foregoing discussion was in a sense an illustration. It was a method in which he had been anticipated by Cicero, Dionysius of Halicarnassus, and others; but by no one was it turned to better account or employed with a fuller sense of its various possibilities. Of his reference to Hebrew literature something has already been said. It was an attempt to reinforce his argument by means of a wider outlook suggesting the universal nature of the phenomenon he was discussing; and the passage which takes cognisance of a literature outside the Graeco-Roman tradition, has since been hailed as the beginning of the comparative study of literature. More commonly, however, his purpose in employing the method is to bring out by means of contrast the salient characteristics of this or that writer; though in some instances he aims also at deciding their respective values, owing possibly to the controversies which persisted concerning the merits of such writers as Demosthenes and Plato. At any rate there can be no doubt about the efficacy of the method in his hands, whether he is dealing with orators of different countries, orators belonging to one and the same age, or with poets of the classical and post-classical eras. In each case he contrives to throw into relief some particular quality or qualities with a clearness and a force that no unaided comment could have done. And this is seen for instance in his comparison of Demosthenes and Cicero. By this time Demosthenes's grandeur of utterance had become to some extent a commonplace of criticism; but "Longinus" refines on that estimate by calling

attention to the different effects of the eloquence of Cicero and Demosthenes. Both writers are described as "consuming fires"; but whereas Cicero succeeds by the profusion, the sustained and cumulative character of his efforts, Demosthenes on the other hand is said to excel in vehemence, swiftness, and intensity. The one is likened to an ever-widening conflagration devouring everything in its path and growing by what it feeds on; the other to a thunderbolt or lightning flash, sudden and irresistible.¹ "One could sooner face with unflinching eyes a descending thunderbolt", adds "Longinus" elsewhere, "than meet with steady gaze his bursts of passion in their swift succession."² Then, too, there is the comparison drawn between Demosthenes and Hyperides which is instrumental in bringing out other aspects of Demosthenes's genius, more particularly his limitations.³ Thus Hyperides is said to be endowed with all the graces; he is capable of simplicity, elegance, and wit, he has variety and charm, and he touches all the stops save those of the highest emotional quality. In comparison, Demosthenes is held to be wanting in most of these qualities; his tone never varies, he is always on the heights; he lacks ease and charm, while his attempts at a lighter vein are apt to result in the ludicrous. Yet in the highest reaches he is said to be unapproachable; and by virtue of this quality, as opposed to mere versatility, he is declared to be the supreme orator. Or again, there is the comparative estimate formed of classical Greek and Alexandrian poets,⁴ which brings to light unmistakably the essential points of difference between the two schools. Thus the flawless elegance of such Alexandrian poets as Apollonius and Eratosthenes is contrasted with the more exalted but less "correct" utterances of Homer and Sophocles. And the point is emphasised elsewhere when in a comparison of parallel passages, both descriptions of a storm, taken from Homer and Aratus, Homer's naturalness is contrasted with the artificiality of Aratus, who, according to "Longinus", succeeds in being neat and trivial instead of impressive.⁵

These then were some of the judgments passed by "Lon-

¹ c. 12, 4-5.

⁴ c. 33, 4-5.

² c. 34, 4 (tr. W. R. R.).

⁵ c. 10, 6.

³ c. 34.

ginus" on earlier literature; and among them was included much that was memorable in his achievement in this field. At the same time there were in his work other pronouncements on many of the great writers; and of these his remarks on Plato are not the least interesting, being doubtless an echo of that controversy already mentioned, in which Caecilius, Dionysius, and Gnaeus Pompeius had each played a part. Hence the unusual vigour of "Longinus's" reply to Caecilius whom he charges with gross prejudice and critical blindness, adding that Caecilius was animated with a hatred for Plato even greater than his love for Lysias.¹ And in the same downright fashion he submits his own view that Plato was altogether superior to Lysias, whether merits or faults were the criterion. That he indulged in cheap effects occasionally, that he sometimes fell into excess in figurative writing, making use of harsh metaphors and an inflated style;² these things are conceded by "Longinus". But for the rest, he stoutly maintains the overwhelming distinction of Plato's style, the stately dignity of his movement, less fiery and vehement than that of Demosthenes, yet with the noiseless grandeur of a vast sea,³ his Homeric reminiscences,⁴ the tuneful harmonies of his periphrases;⁵ in short, he is one of the great masters recommended by "Longinus" as touchstones for forming judgments as to literary value. In addition, scattered throughout his work are comments on writers such as Herodotus, Xenophon, Timaeus, and Theopompus, most of whom are quoted to illustrate some lapse of taste. And more significant still are the appreciations of Greek dramatists, which while probably representing the established judgments of antiquity, are valuable also as indicating "Longinus's" own preferences and tastes. Thus Aeschylus is praised for his magnificence, but is censured for occasional bombast and turgidity.⁶ Sophocles is ranked among the greatest by virtue of his *Oedipus Rex*;⁷ though the extant plays do not support the censure of faultiness implied by "Longinus" when he compares him with Ion.⁸ And again,

¹ c. 32, 8.

² c. 32, 7.

³ c. 12, 3.

⁴ c. 13, 3.

⁵ c. 28, 1.

⁶ c. 3, 1.

⁷ c. 33, 5.

⁸ Cf. Demetrius, *On Style*, § 114, where a Sophoclean line is quoted to illustrate "frigidity" and magniloquence; also Plutarch's *How to study Poetry* (*de aud. poet.*), 45, B, where Sophocles is charged with unevenness

Euripides is commended for his artistry rather than his ideas; his use of compelling images, the tragic nature of his vivid descriptions, and his supreme skill in scenes of madness and love, are all duly noted.¹

From what has now been said of "Longinus's" literary judgments something may be gathered of his work as a judicial critic, his standards, his methods, the range and quality of his pronouncements. That he approached his task unhampered by rules and with a mind disinterested and free from prejudice, this much at least will be readily conceded. Nor can it be denied that his estimates are singularly just. They coincide in a great measure with the considered verdicts of posterity; and where necessary he is not sparing in his censures, the weakness as well as the strength of the greatest being brought to light. Everywhere, in short, he shows a keen eye for essentials; he discriminates clearly between fine shades and effects; and his verdicts are always free from dogmatism and pedantry. Yet more important than all this are those judgments that aim not at assessing, but at interpreting, literary values; those appreciations of his that enlighten and stimulate, and enable us to read with quickened intelligence. Of these the illuminating commentary on Homer provides perhaps the best example. It is the chapter (c. ix) described by Gibbon as "one of the finest monuments of antiquity"; and in it "Longinus" not only lays bare his own spiritual experiences, the appeal made by Homer to his imagination and emotions, but he does so in such a way and with such enthusiasm that he succeeds in communicating his feelings to his readers. This is none other than criticism of the highest kind; "the praise, the infectious praise, of the greatest literature", according to the modern formula. From mere impressionism it differs in that it is based on sound psychological grounds; it is the fruit of conscious analysis and a delicate imaginative sympathy with this or that piece of art. And in this form of criticism "Longinus" was something of a

(ἀνωμαλία). Such censures were commonplaces of Graeco-Roman criticism and were possibly due to occasional lapses from his usual dignity arising out of his attempts at parodying Aeschylus (see W. Rhys Roberts, *Class. Rev.* vol. XL, p. 115).

¹ cc. 15, 40.

pioneer; for although Dionysius before him had entered the same field his efforts were mainly confined to technical points. There are, in short, many respects in which "Longinus" stands high as a judicial critic; and not least is the fact that he takes account of three separate literatures. Yet more significant still is his anticipation of modern criticism, in those interpretations of his which lead to a more intimate understanding of ancient art, and reveal in the clearest light his appreciation of the essence of literature.

Such then in their main details are the contents of this work *On the Sublime*—the dissertation on style, and the literary appreciations with which the essay is illuminated—and it now remains to attempt some estimate of the contribution as a whole, as well as of the place it occupies in the critical development. Of "Longinus's" indebtedness to his predecessors in the first place there can be no question. Many of his remarks are of the nature of commonplaces familiar to his contemporaries; while other suggestions or ideas are occasionally drawn from earlier writers. Thus the conception of literary criticism as "the crowning fruit of ripe experience" was already present in the *Grammar* of Dionysius Thrax, where it figures as the final and noblest function of the grammatical discipline; and the notion almost certainly was common property at the time. The *quod semper* principle, again, the danger in avoiding one fault of falling into another, the limitations of mere "correctness", and the fact that Homer occasionally nodded: all these were ideas familiar to Horace and probably to others, and in one form or another were utilised by "Longinus". Then, too, the secrets of verbal felicity had to some extent been explored by Horace and Dionysius of Halicarnassus; from Caecilius it is not improbable that he drew his reference to *Genesis*, as well as the idea of his comparison between Demosthenes and Cicero; while to Tacitus, or to Tacitus's sources, he may also have been indebted for some of his views as to the causes of the decline of contemporary style. All this and more may freely be granted; and yet nothing emerges more clearly than the originality of his treatment, the new outlook he affords on literary questions, and the permanent and universal value of many of his utterances.

In some measure these facts have already been suggested: in his new sense of literary values, the fresh life he breathes into rhetorical discussions, the importance he attaches to such things as the imagination, the emotions, the beauty of words, and not least, the aesthetic appreciation of literature. But over and above all these are other suggestions on literature in general, which not only represented something new at the time but are also full of meaning for later ages. Highly significant for one thing is his attitude to style, and the nature of the remedy he proposes for the contemporary chaos and licence. Faced with the same problem, Quintilian, as we shall see, was recommending a return to a sort of modified classicism; whereas Tacitus, alive to new influences at work, which possibly demanded some modification of earlier standards, was for developing the latent possibilities of the prevailing discord in style, while discarding its obvious abuses. With neither of these prescriptions, however, is "Longinus" wholly satisfied. The orthodox Ciceronianism he possibly regarded as limited and mechanical; while Tacitus's tentative proposals for the recognition of new methods may have seemed to him vague and even dangerous. At all events what he advocates is a return to the standards, and above all the spirit, of the classical Greeks; his governing doctrine being that despite all changes in political and social life there exist certain unchanging principles of all good writing, principles that are best revealed by an interpretation of the spirit of the ancient masterpieces. To his contemporaries this teaching should have come as a reminder of the true essence of classicism, a doctrine that was positive, well founded, and of universal application. And since his principles are firmly rooted in human nature, they are not without their significance for later ages.

Equally original and suggestive, however, are his views regarding literature in the wider sense of the term; for here again he stands alone in the keenness of his vision, his penetrating insight into the nature and function of the literary art. That he conceived it to be no mere craft but a thing of the spirit is shown throughout by the character of his treatment. Thus to him a poet was great, not by reason of his technique,

but in virtue of his imagination, his gift of feeling, and his power of conveying those qualities to others. And this conception, which is essentially modern, had not hitherto been formulated by any critic. Then, too, from the same standpoint he asserts that the ultimate causes of decline in literature are of a spiritual kind; the loss of the sense of the ideal and visionary, and the consequent deadening of man's immortal part. Others before him had referred to the growing materialism of the age; but "Longinus's" statement is couched in more specific terms and in accordance with his animating theory. Great literature and little minds, he seems to say, go ill together. And in many other ways does he foster the same outlook in literature, by directing attention from the technical to the more elusive side of art. Thus he hints in more than one place that formal rules may be disregarded at the bidding of a higher law: an important aesthetic truth which was to be rediscovered by modern critics. Elsewhere he points out the inevitable and organic relation existing between thought and expression;¹ or again, the atmosphere of infinite suggestion bound up with all great literature;² while he also establishes once for all the survival value attached to great art. Nor is he less suggestive in his remarks on the function of literature. Of the earlier didactic conception he gives not a hint; and what is perhaps more surprising, he disregards entirely the stock theories of "pleasure" and "persuasion". What he sees in literature is a great aesthetic force, appealing irresistibly to the whole nature of man, uplifting, bracing, and stimulating, while nourishing something that lies deep in his nature. With Aristotle he perceives that literature works mainly through the emotions, and that its process in effect is one of a cathartic kind—though he nowhere alludes to that theory. But in addition he also brings to light something not covered by Aristotelian theory; the wider view attained by means of the imagination, the more comprehensive and more stimulating catharsis which embraced the whole of the higher nature of man. And in this larger conception of the aesthetic function he approaches more nearly to modern ideas than did any of his predecessors.

¹ c. 30, 1.

² c. 7, 3.

It therefore becomes clear that in "Longinus" we have a great original critic, one who, propounding the truths of art as he sees them, succeeds in opening men's eyes to new aspects of literature. Nor is his manner any less original than his matter; for in his subjectivity, his enthusiasm, his lively and personal style, may be noted features which for the most part were wanting in earlier critical work. It is not too much to say, paradoxical as it may sound, that from no other of the ancient critical writings does the author emerge more clearly than from this work, the authorship of which is unknown. And this is partly the result of the sincerity and ardour of the thought, the generosity of the judgments, and the modesty with which the author puts forward his opinions. Of his acute sensibilities and his catholic taste something has already been said; but along with these there went also a certain directness of vision and an instinct for seeking first principles in his various discussions. That he is not altogether exempt from laboured refinements may be conceded; while in one place he seems to give countenance to the allegorical interpretation of Homer.¹ Nevertheless in the work as a whole there is surprisingly little dead matter; on the other hand much that is vital, expressed in memorable fashion. Nor is his style an unworthy medium of his thought, lacking though it may be in Attic purity of speech. Reminiscent in some ways of Plato's manner, and rich with metaphors, compounds, and poetical expressions, it has at the same time a peculiar intensity of its own; and this was due partly to striking epigrams and picturesque similes, partly also to long periods brought in each instance to a triumphant close.

As for the place he occupies in the critical development this much at least is obvious, that in an age of confused standards he advocated in unique fashion a return to the ideals of Greek classical art. The doctrine as such was no new thing: it had been put forward by Cicero, Horace, Dionysius and others. But whereas their teaching had been partial, with technical and formal tendencies, a classicism in short which was to become still narrower in later ages, "Longinus" alone succeeded in recapturing the spirit of the ancient art, and in laying

¹ c. 9, 7.

bare by his analysis the unchanging principles of that art. This, when all is said, must be regarded as his great achievement, that with a clearer perception of the influence of changing conditions than his predecessors had possessed, he still maintained the permanent validity of those principles where literature was concerned. It is therefore as an exponent of the genuine classical spirit that he is perhaps best described; and not, as he has been called, the first romantic critic.¹ Throughout his discussion, it has been noted, he is concerned mainly with ancient Greek models, while his theory is solely based on the conception of art as the product of principles deduced from the practice of the past. Nor is this reverence for tradition the only classical element in his constitution. He is classical also in the balance he maintains between genius and unimpassioned hard work, in his sense of the need for fitness, selection, and a fine adjustment of means to ends; while in addition, a "romantic" critic would not have been blind to the "romance" in the *Odyssey*. So that it is as one of the last of classical critics that he figures primarily in ancient critical history. But while this is true, it is true also that he anticipates much that is modern in critical work. And this is shown by his concern with the essence rather than with the form of literature, his understanding of the part played by the imagination and the feelings in creative work, his efforts at literary interpretation and appreciation, his widening outlook and the variety of his judicial methods; features which were to reappear only after the lapse of centuries. The fact is that in him were combined faculties that were characteristic of the greatest of his predecessors. Like Aristotle, for instance, he based his theories on existing Greek literature; he likewise aimed at a rational explanation of literary phenomena; and his methods of theorising are analytic, inductive, psychological, and historical. On the other hand, he is spiritually the antithesis of Aristotle; for nothing could be farther removed from the cold intellectualism of Aristotle than the impassioned and suggestive teaching of "Longinus". And in this respect he is reminiscent of Plato, for whom he betrays everywhere the warmest admiration.

¹ See R. A. Scott-James, *The Making of Literature*, c. viii.

Platonic affinities, in short, are seen in his use of the imaginative reason as well as in his idealism and enthusiasms; and these are among the things that make the work what it is, one of the great masterpieces. Hence his claim to rank with the greatest of ancient critics, whose work he may be said to have supplemented to a marked degree. In one respect indeed he may be fairly regarded as unique; in the quality of his criticism both theoretical and applied. And for the rest he must be numbered among the seminal minds of all time. Conspicuous for his suggestiveness and for the number of aesthetic truths he revealed or made familiar, he stands as a reminder of some of the essentials of literature, and as a lasting and stimulating force in the field of literary taste.

Of the subsequent history of the work there is this to be said, that its influence, despite its value, was comparatively slight. Rediscovered at the Renaissance, it remained for a century or more a close preserve of scholars,¹ until Boileau's popular translation of 1674 introduced it to a wider sphere and led to its recognition as a work of the first importance, worthy of being ranked in the contemporary estimate with the works of Aristotle, Horace, and Quintilian. After this the treatise was edited and translated with increasing frequency throughout the eighteenth century; and both in England and abroad it became familiar to men of letters. Yet even so, its true significance was far from being realised; owing partly to the looseness of Boileau's translation, partly also to its unfamiliar style and the many difficulties of interpretation presented by the text. Some acquaintance with the work was shown by most English critics from Dryden onwards; Dennis, derisively dubbed "Sir Longinus", being regarded as its chief exponent. But its influence was nevertheless limited to minor, if not negligible, points. It gave for instance a new impetus to the attack on those "ultra-Crepidarians", who deemed criticism to consist in the mere detection of faults; and in this way it strengthened the hands of those who held that the true critic was concerned with beauties rather than with defects. It also led to fresh emphasis

¹ See W. Rhys Roberts, *Longinus on the Sublime*, pp. 247ff., and A. Rosenberg, *Longinus in England bis zum Ende des 18 Jahrhunderts*, Berl. Diss. 1917.

being laid on emotion as the basis of poetry, and on the aesthetic values of charm and power as opposed to regularity and "correctness". These things, along with the new critical terms "bathos" and "the sublime", were practically the sole results of acquaintance with the ancient masterpiece; and it is not without its significance that both additions to critical terminology were based on misunderstandings. Whatever "Longinus" may have meant by the terms he originally employed it was certainly not the meanings read into them by Pope, Burke, and others. With him the word βάθος,¹ for instance, did not stand for a ludicrous descent from the sublime to the commonplace; nor did ὕψος carry with it the suggestion of obscurity and infinity. Such then was the limited appreciation accorded to "Longinus" at the height of his popularity in the eighteenth century; and it is only within the last generation or so that his real merits have received anything like due recognition. Nowadays the supreme qualities of the work are no longer in question. Ranking in antiquity with the greatest critical achievements, it "remains towering among all other works of its class"; and for sheer originality and power it has not been surpassed. The story of its fortunes, it must be confessed, is one of the most curious; there are but few instances in literary history of merit being so long and so persistently ignored. And this has been facilitated perhaps by the tendency to view the treatise in isolation; a work, as it has been described, "abiding alone in thought and history". Yet its true meaning would seem to emerge only when viewed against its historical background; and in that same setting its manifold excellences are also most clearly seen. There are things in its pages that can never grow old; while its freshness and light will continue to charm all ages. All beautiful things, it has been said, belong to the same age; and the work of "Longinus" is in a sense contemporaneous with that of Plato and Aristotle and Coleridge.

¹ c. 2, 1; see E. D. T. Jenkins, *Class. Rev.* XLV (1930), p. 174 for a discussion of this term.

CHAPTER VII

THE RESTATEMENT OF CLASSICISM: QUINTILIAN¹

THERE yet remains for consideration in the critical revival of the latter half of the first century A.D. the work of Quintilian, another of the major figures. And arresting as the work of Tacitus and "Longinus" had been in the sphere of criticism, the position of Quintilian is none the less assured, though for different reasons; his intrinsic merits as well as the historical interest of his writings giving him a place of honour among the critics of antiquity. Of the political and social changes which had given him his unique opportunity something has already been said; notably the new interest shown in education under Vespasian and his successors, and again the Imperial recognition of Quintilian as the first public *rhetor* at Rome. He began to teach in A.D. 68; and for twenty years or more he remained the most influential teacher in the capital, numbering among his pupils many of the future men of letters, while at the same time practising extensively in the law-courts. On his retirement he wrote a treatise *On the Decay of Oratory* (*De causis corruptae eloquentiae*), a work, no longer extant, which has since been ascribed to Tacitus, though on no very satisfactory grounds. A few years later, about the year A.D. 93, he produced his great work *The Training of an Orator* (*Institutio Oratoria*), in which were comprised the results of a life-time of teaching; and upon this work his fame securely rests. Concerning the prevailing literary conditions, and more particularly the literary theories then current, some statement has already been made. It was an age of confusion in literary matters, the main problem of the century being the improvement of contemporary oratory and prose style. From an earlier period had come down a curious medley of views on the subject of oratory, constituting at this stage a collection of discordant opinions

¹ *Texts and Translations: Institutio Oratoria*, ed. with trans. by H. E. Butler (Loeb Cl. Lib.), 4 vols. London, 1921-2; Book I ed. by F. H. Colson, Cambridge, 1924; trans. by Guthrie, London, 1805; by J. Watson (Bohn Lib.), rep. 1903; extracts (tr.) in Saintsbury, *Loci Critici*, pp. 62-73.

which could succeed only in darkening counsel; and the multitude of remedies proposed points clearly to the confusion which prevailed. Then into this confusion, which the popularity of the younger Seneca only tended to increase, had come, as we have seen, the pronouncements of Tacitus and "Longinus". Yet vital and challenging as were those respective utterances, it may fairly be doubted whether at the time they attracted much attention; the one being merely an expression of views on the part of a young though promising advocate; the other the work of a man of letters who for some reason or other was singularly remote from the centre of things. It was from Quintilian, in short, that the authoritative pronouncement on the situation ultimately came; the considered judgment of one who had grown old in the service of rhetoric. And his treatise, which in his own day doubtless derived much of its importance from the prestige and official standing of its author, has since commended itself to posterity by its wisdom, its sanity and common sense.

Concerning the form of his work, *The Training of an Orator*, this may first be said, that while it has features that distinguish it from earlier treatises, it is primarily and essentially traditional in kind. Thus the work consists of twelve Books, the result of two years' labour. Book I is concerned with education preliminary to the study of rhetoric; Book II with a discussion of the nature and aims of rhetoric; Books III-VII with oratory itself, and more particularly with the finding and arrangement of arguments; Books VIII-X with the subject of style; Book XI with memory and delivery; and Book XII with what goes to make the perfect orator. In its main features the plan of the treatise will therefore be found to be that of isagogic works fashioned on Hellenistic lines, the influence of which has already been traced in the writings of Cicero and Horace.¹ Thus it is not without its significance that Quintilian states in one place that rhetoric was best treated under three heads; art (*de arte*), the artist (*de artifice*), and the work (*de opere*).² This is obviously reminiscent of the three divisions characteristic of Hellenistic *Poetics*: *poesis* or subject-matter, *poema* or form, and *poeta*

¹ See pp. 26, 70 *supra*.

² II, 14, 5.

or the poet. And it is furthermore the scheme adopted by Quintilian for his main outline, Books III-VII dealing with subject-matter, Books VIII-XI with form, and Book XII with the orator himself. Then, too, the scheme is developed on normal and conventional lines. Quintilian treats in Books III-VII of the finding and arrangement of subject-matter (*inventio* and *dispositio*), in Books VIII-X of style or expression (*elocutio*), and in Book XI of memory and delivery (*memoria* and *pronuntiatio*), these being as he states the customary divisions of the subject;¹ while he also considers the three recognised "kinds" of oratory, viz. panegyric, deliberative, and forensic,² though his attention is mainly concentrated on the last of the three. But if Quintilian thus follows closely the routine methods of previous rhetoricians, at the same time under his treatment the formal scheme is made to yield entirely new results. It is indeed a *Rhetoric* which he thus produces; but it is one in which the dry bones of that study are made to live anew, and in which the teaching is of a humane and personal kind. Not a little is due to the generous outlook of the author; for he has poured into the work the fruits of his wide reading and experience, and while discussing oratory he has not scrupled to wander in the fields of literature and pedagogy. One section of the work (Book I) is in fact a short but illuminating treatise on the principles of education; yet another section (Book X, I) is in substance a *History of Literature*, one of the earliest of its kind. And since from Cicero Quintilian had learnt the importance of making his teaching attractive he has spared no effort to commend what he writes to his readers. In one place he states that such has been his deliberate intention, and that he was but following the example of Lucretius in this "smearing with honey the edges of his cup of wormwood".³ Lucretius in setting forth his philosophy had adopted verse for this purpose; and among the means adopted by Quintilian with the same object in view was that of an easy cultured style, which, devoid of all pedantry, was lacking in neither colour nor force.

For the proper understanding of the nature of Quintilian's achievement, however, it is important to realise from the first

¹ III, 3.² III, 4.³ III, I, 4.

the causes which led to the production of his work, and the particular objects he had in view. According to his own statement the immediate occasion of his writing was the importunity of friends who urged him to provide some clear and definite guidance in oratory, in view of the confused and often contradictory nature of the authoritative teaching of the past.¹ And this explanation, though somewhat conventional, there is no real reason for doubting; it was an appeal that might very well have been made to a master of his craft for instruction that he alone could give on a subject that was of interest to all first-century readers. At the same time, not inconsistent with this theory is the view that Quintilian's ultimate reasons for writing lay deeper than this, and that he was definitely influenced by causes arising out of the actual conditions of oratory at the time. In his work, *On the Decay of Oratory*, he had already treated certain aspects of the subject which were commanding considerable attention; and it is not unreasonable to suppose that here in his greater treatise he was supplementing his earlier work by a further effort of a constructive kind to enlighten his generation. What at any rate is certain is that throughout his discussion he has contemporary conditions in mind; and in consequence his treatment is something more than a mere academic disquisition on an abstract theme.

Nowhere, for instance, is a more complete indictment made of the stylistic abuses of the time than is to be found scattered throughout his pages. Similar arraignments, it is true, had been made by each of the earlier critics; but by none in such detail or in so comprehensive a fashion. Thus amidst all his teaching there runs as his constant theme the decadence of contemporary style and stylists, their dislike of plain speech, their bad taste, their love of meretricious finery, their painful and futile elaboration, and above all their indulgence in the inevitable epigram. In places he enlarges on some of these things. He contrasts for instance the dignity, the care for art, of the old Latin writers with the cheap artificiality of the moderns, who were said to regard the epigram as the sole merit of every sort of writing.² Again, he refers with scorn to the

¹ I, Pr. 2.² I, 8, 9.

fashionable flowers of speech (*flosculi*) with their enervating charm, to which, it was added, young writers were peculiarly susceptible owing to their very nature.¹ Elsewhere he laments the loss of plain and sincere utterance. "In our passion for words", he states,² "we paraphrase what might be said in plain language, repeat what we have already said at sufficient length, pile up a number of words where one would suffice, and regard allusion as better than directness of speech. So, too, . . . we think no phrase eloquent that another could possibly have used. We borrow Figures and metaphors from the most decadent poets, and regard it as a real sign of genius that it should require a genius to understand our meaning." His severest comment is reserved, however, for the passage where he describes in general the popular style of the day as one "which revels in licence of diction, or wantons in childish epigram, or swells with stilted bombast, or riots in empty commonplace, or adorns itself with blossoms of eloquence which will fall to the earth if but lightly shaken, or regards extravagance as sublime, or raves wildly under the pretext of free speech".³ These are but a few passages taken from different sections of the work; but the treatise is full of incidental allusions to such abuses, and there can be little doubt that these matters were ever present with Quintilian in the process of composition.

Equally significant is also his diagnosis of the situation, his analysis of the causes which had led to the decay of eloquence; though here must first be noted a certain short-sightedness which limited his vision, and led him to ignore factors of the first importance. Of political and social influences he takes no account, except to remark that the prevailing abnormalities of style were all part and parcel of those eccentricities of taste which disfigured social life, the practice of depilation, for instance, or the vogue for curling-irons and for painted faces.⁴ This point had been made, if in less picturesque fashion, by most of the earlier critics; but of the ethical and political influences discussed by Tacitus and "Longinus", Quintilian takes no heed. The truth was that, his interests being mainly

¹ II, 5, 22.³ XII, 10, 73 (tr. H. E. Butler).² VIII, Pr. 24-5 (tr. H. E. Butler).⁴ II, 5, 11.

pedagogic, it was the educational side of the problem that absorbed his whole attention, to the neglect of considerations that were equally important. At any rate what he submits is a detailed account of those defects in the contemporary intellectual life which, in his opinion, lay at the root of the mischief; and incidentally, the picture he draws forms a striking commentary on the educational life of the time. With the condition of all stages of education he has fault to find. Both the *grammatici* and the rhetoricians, he held, were responsible in a large measure for the false or inadequate conceptions of style then current; and the results were apparent in the stylistic abuses of the age. The *grammatici* as instructors, in the first place, he charged with neglecting their real work, which was the teaching of correct expression.¹ They were apt, Quintilian maintains, to invade the province of the rhetoricians, and indeed to trifle with other branches of study; while not infrequently they kept back pupils either for mercenary reasons or through incompetence.² In addition, their teaching was largely of a pedantic and aimless kind; and this was seen in their commentaries on literature, which were often little more than compilations of all the remarks ever made even by the most worthless writers, and were therefore successful only in obscuring the main issues. All facts, Quintilian suggests, are not of equal value; and he adds, not without a touch of malice, that "there are some things which it is a merit in a teacher of literature not to know".³ Nor were things in a better way with the professional rhetoricians, in whose hands after all lay the main responsibility in matters of style. Here again Quintilian detects the same pedantry and shallowness at work, confusing, degrading, and vulgarising stylistic ideals in the minds of the adolescent. The mischief was begun in the text-books of the schools with their routine methods, their classifications, definitions, and rules; and here is perhaps the chief count in Quintilian's indictment, if we may judge from the persistency with which he returns to the point. Thus he condemns the arbitrary decrees of the text-books; the endless disputes of the rhetoricians as to the *genera* and *species* of tropes;⁴ or again, the

¹ II, I, I.² XII, II, 14.³ I, 8, 21.⁴ VIII, 6, I.

excessive subtlety of their analysis, which, while complicating matters, led also to the neglect of the nobler aspects of style, by focussing attention solely on the bare bones of the study.¹ Elsewhere he attacks, as critics before him had done, the part played in rhetorical training by declamations on fictitious themes, such as "magicians, plagues, oracles, cruel step-mothers and the like".² In his own day, he explains, this practice held the field; and such was the extravagance of the treatment that Quintilian definitely regards it as "one of the main causes of the corruption of contemporary oratory".³ In addition, to the influence of the rhetoricians he attributes in part the craze for epigrams. "Nowadays", he states, "our rhetoricians require every passage, every sentence, to end with a striking close";⁴ and the result, he points out, is a collection of tiny epigrams, affected and irrelevant.

But while it is to the inefficiency of the schools that Quintilian mainly attributes the decline of contemporary eloquence, at the same time he is conscious of other influences at work, influences due to the survival of earlier tendencies and theories; and these also he includes in his survey of contemporary conditions. First among such contributory causes was the teaching of those who claimed an unchartered freedom in the matter of expression. For them, it was their boast, no art was necessary. All that was needed was inspiration, a collection of effective epigrams, and due attention to purple patches; and with their pretensions and their results alike Quintilian makes great play.⁵ More serious is his treatment of the views cherished by the *litterati* and the *mediocriter docti*, who were wont to discuss literary questions in those coteries of which that of the younger Pliny was an example. There would be found those who looked back with longing to the crude simplicity and vigour of the old Roman writers, and who held that with them lay the remedy for contemporary abuses.⁶ Others there were who kept alive the Asiatic tradition, and were loud in their support of those very features which gave such obvious pleasure to the majority;⁷ while others, again, of the Atticist persuasion, maintained that

¹ I, Pr. 24.² II, 10, 5.³ II, 10, 3.⁴ VIII, 5, 13.⁵ II, 11, 3 ff.⁶ X, 1, 43.⁷ *Ibid.*

the only style to be commended was of a plain and austere kind.¹ And concerning their position Quintilian was constrained to add, as "Longinus"² had said before him, that afraid to climb for fear of falling, they succeeded only in achieving an unchanging flatness.³ Such then were the cross-currents of doctrine of which Quintilian makes mention in the course of his work; and that it was largely as a corrective to this state of things that he wrote can scarcely be doubted.

With this as the background of Quintilian's work we turn now to a consideration of the treatise itself, which, as its title implies, was an attempt to set forth the guiding principles of oratory, those hidden laws on which the art was ultimately based. His subject being oratory in the fullest sense of the term, it was inevitable that some sections of his work should be of greater interest than others, at least from the point of view of literary criticism. According to his own statement, the aim of oratory being persuasion, the means to that end were, first, the invention of argument and its orderly presentment, and secondly, a fitting choice of words and their artistic arrangement. To the former of these aspects he devotes five Books (III-VII) of the treatise, which are mainly concerned with forensic oratory and its multitudinous technicalities; and in these Books will be found little that is relevant to our present purpose. The rest of the work consists for the most part of a disquisition on oratorical style, to which each Book contributes in greater or less degree, though the main discussion occupies Books VIII-X. And here will be found a mine of critical doctrines and judgments, well worth the attention of modern readers. For this section of his treatment, it is important to note, Quintilian claims a large measure of originality. In his previous discussion with regard to the finding and arranging of argument he had made, so he states, a discriminating use of rhetorical text-books. But his theory of style he describes as "newly discovered" (*eloquendi rationem novissime repertam*),⁴ being a theme that had rarely been attempted by others; while for his remarks on the ideal orator he had found no guidance save that of Cicero, whom he hailed as an earlier adventurer on the same

¹ X, I, 44.² C. 33, 2.³ VIII, 5, 32.⁴ XII, Pr. 3.

vast seas of learning.¹ At first sight this claim to originality on the part of Quintilian may seem somewhat surprising, as the theory he expounds does not differ vitally from that of his predecessors. It is on their foundations that he obviously builds; there is the same recognition of the ancient masters as models, the same value attached to the process of imitation. Where his originality lies however is in his change of basis. He does not accept antiquity as his sole or even his main guide, finding there no stable foundation but only perpetual change.² What he therefore proposes to do is to work from first principles; to adopt the best of the earlier teaching, correcting and supplementing those doctrines however in the light of his own experience, and above all, in accordance with the dictates of nature or reason (*experimento meo ac natura ipsa duce*).³ Hence from the first the rational character of his procedure is made plain. Unlike Cicero and Horace, Dionysius, "Longinus" and others, he does not rest his theory primarily on the authority and practice of the classical Greeks, but rather on nature, reason, experience; and the change is one of some significance in the critical development. Nor was this the only sense in which Quintilian claimed to have made a new departure in theorising on rhetoric. As opposed to the vast body of rhetoricians he refuses to contemplate a rigid code of rules or "a system of laws as immutable as fate" as part of his plan.⁴ On the contrary, he is conscious that there are few rules the validity of which cannot be challenged, while he is aware too of the existence of "graces that lie beyond the reach of art".⁵ He therefore definitely states that his intention is not to put forward rules that are universally and invariably applicable (*praecepta . . . universalia vel perpetua*),⁶ but rather to inculcate general principles suggestive of the main truths. And this he proposes to do in a fashion free from all dogmatism; "I intend", he writes,⁷ "to make plain my views on the subject, but I shall leave my readers free to form their own opinions".

¹ Cf. Dryden's echo of this passage: "I was sailing in a vast ocean without other help than the pole-star of the Ancients" (*Essays of Dryden*, ed. Ker, II, 17).

² VIII, 5, 33.

⁶ IX, 4, 117.

³ VI, 2, 25.

⁶ II, 13, 14.

¹ II, 13, 1.

⁷ IX, 4, 2.

On this new basis and in this new spirit therefore does Quintilian draw up his theory of oratorical eloquence. And it may at once be said that his theory is intended to apply to written as well as to spoken prose, thus giving to his teaching a wider application and significance. Some there were, he states,¹ who distinguished between the two, assigning to the one greater correctness and polish, and to the other greater energy and artifice. To Quintilian, however, such subtleties did not appeal. "To me", he wrote,² "there is no essential difference between speaking well and writing well" (*mihi unum atque idem videtur bene dicere ac bene scribere*); and here is perhaps the first definite recognition by a critic of written prose, though by implication it had been considered by most of the earlier theorists, and notably by Cicero and Dionysius. In proceeding then with his task of expounding his doctrine Quintilian begins with some general statements, many of them commonplaces, but necessary preliminaries for defining his position. Thus in the first place he puts forward his case for the study of the art of oratory—doubtless in reply to current objections. There were for instance those, he states,³ who argued that unstudied expression was best, that eloquence again was merely the fruit of natural gifts often possessed by the uneducated, or again, that since oratory existed before the formulation of art a knowledge of art could not be regarded as a condition precedent. Many of such arguments—and there were others besides—Quintilian regards as little more than quibbles; and he is content with showing that Art, so far from being in conflict with Nature, is merely a methodising of Nature's processes, a means of rendering natural effort more effective. Thus he points out that all Art has its origin in Nature, is in fact based on observation of Nature's ways;⁴ and furthermore, that the results of Art are natural in the highest sense of the term, since "that is most natural which is allowed by Nature to attain its most perfect form".⁵ Hence his plea for the cultivation of the

¹ XII, 10, 49-50.

² XII, 10, 51.

³ II, 17, 1 ff.; IX, 4, 3.

⁴ II, 17, 9 and 41 ff. See p. 221 *supra*. Cf. Shakespeare:

"Nature is made better by no mean

But Nature makes that mean" (*The Winter's Tale*, IV, 3, 106-7).

⁵ IX, 4, 5.

art of oratory; and to those who denied its value he replied that lack of orderly structure did not add strength to style, nor was polish necessarily inconsistent with vigour. Nothing, he adds, can attain its full strength without the aid of art; while with art was said to be closely linked both grace and beauty.¹

On the other hand Quintilian is conscious that natural gifts are equally necessary for the creation of the great orator; and that artistic training without the aid of genius (*natura*) cannot do much.² He therefore endorses the familiar doctrine of the need for natural capacity, which should be fertilised by art and improved by practice. "Skill in speaking (or writing)", he states, "is made perfect by nature, art, and practice" (*natura, ars, exercitatio*).³ Then, too, he follows Cicero in his definition of the orator's aims which he describes as those of instructing, moving, and charming (*docere, movere, delectare*) his hearers;⁴ and this definition he subsequently links up with the conventional classification of styles. At the same time it is evident that in taking over such established doctrine he exercises discrimination, and submits all alike to the touchstone of reason. Thus he cannot accept for instance the traditional account of the beginnings of oratory, according to which that art had been originated by the founders of cities and the makers of laws. This much-quoted commonplace had been approved by Cicero among others; but Quintilian points out the underlying fallacy, seeing that there existed nomadic peoples to whom oratory was not unknown.⁵ Concerning the orator's actual processes he also has something to say; and he dismisses forthwith as being irrational the loose idea of "inspiration" then current, the term applied to that state of exaltation which was said to be due to the influence of some god. He quotes Cicero, for instance, as supporting this theory,⁶ though no trace of such approval can be found in his extant works.⁷ And in reply Quintilian puts forward the more rational theory that such exaltation was due to emotional and "imaginative" causes operating within the orator himself—a doctrine which with some difference was submitted by "Longinus". Thus Quintilian explains that the

¹ IX, 4, 6 ff.² II, 19, 1-3.³ III, 5, 1.⁴ III, 5, 1; XII, 2, 11.⁵ III, 2, 4.⁶ X, 7, 14.⁷ See H. E. Butler, *loc. cit.* note.

first thing necessary for stirring the emotions of others was for the speaker (or writer) to feel those emotions himself.¹ And to this he adds that such emotional activities were best generated by a vivid imagining of this or that experience and its consequent presentment in realistic fashion.² Vivid or realistic impressions of this kind he further describes as *φαντασται* or *visiones*; and their effect as *ἐνδύγεια* or (to use Cicero's term) *illuminatio*.³ And as the sum and substance of his argument he states elsewhere that after all "it is feeling and the power of image-forming that make men eloquent" (*pectus est... quod disertos facit et vis mentis*).⁴

So far then we have been considering the general standpoint of Quintilian; and it is when we examine more closely his theorising on the subject of style that we get to the heart of his treatment and to those doctrines which represent his main contribution to critical theory. His scheme of treatment is comparatively simple. To him style is, broadly speaking, a matter of words, of words singly, and words in combination. And whereas much was held to depend in the first place on the choice of individual words, much was also attributed to their proper arrangement, to the stylistic ornament resulting from the use of Figures and the like, and to further beauties of expression bound up with their artistic placing. These at any rate are the main heads under which he expounds his subject; first, the choice of words, then the use of appropriate ornament, and lastly the effects of artistic structure or arrangement. Concerning the choice of words, to begin with, he has much of interest to say. And here, as elsewhere, the interest will be found to lie not so much in any revolutionary ideas he puts forward as in the comprehensive, reasoned, and persuasive character of his teaching. Thus he insists from the first that style must be based on the speech of ordinary life as providing the words best calculated to give the impression of simplicity and reality.⁵ This injunction he reiterates again and again as a basic principle, pointing out that departures from current usage had generally an air of insincerity and often resulted in

¹ vi, 2, 26. Cf. Horace, "Longinus", etc.

³ vi, 2, 29 and 32.

⁴ x, 7, 15.

² vi, 2, 29.

⁵ viii, Pr. 23.

obscurity. And that here he was combating a current abuse cannot reasonably be doubted. Some orators, he explains, actually fought shy of using ordinary words, preferring for instance such expressions as "Iberian grass" to the more familiar "Spanish broom";¹ while in the schools, he added, such was their squeamishness that half the current vocabulary was in effect placed under a ban. At the same time he is careful to explain what he means by the "speech of ordinary life"; that it was not necessarily the speech of the majority, in which he detects, as in the social life of the time, strange and vicious eccentricities. Nor did it include those barbarisms (Spanish or African terms) which were coming into vogue, nor certain obsolete words which were being increasingly affected, nor again, incorrect grammatical forms known as solecisms.² All such elements he condemned as spurious Latin forms; while incidentally he protested against the craze for Analogy which he maintained had given rise to many a solecism, being a law that was not capable of universal application.³ The truth was that in the matter of correct usage the only safe guide in his opinion lay in a discriminating use of the current diction, such as for instance was to be found in "the agreed practice of educated men".⁴

But while a correctness based on the speech of ordinary life was thus the first essential for eloquence in expression, Quintilian also recognises that more was needed for successful utterance. And in the first place he states definitely that everyday speech (*sermo vulgaris*) in itself was inadequate, that it required to be raised to a higher power for artistic purposes, and that much could be done in that way by a proper choice of words⁵—a direct contradiction of the familiar theory advanced at a later date by Wordsworth. Thus Quintilian points out that some words were endowed with greater potentialities than others, being possessed of pleasure-giving qualities of various kinds. There were words, he explains, that were specially brilliant or well-sounding owing to their very forms; they were generally those, he adds, that were rich in vowels.⁶

¹ viii, 2, 2.⁴ i, 6, 45.² i, 5, 5.⁵ xii, 10, 43.³ i, 6, 16.⁶ viii, 3, 16.

Others there were that won dignity by reason of their associations, and from their use by this or that great writer;¹ whereas commonplace words on occasion might also add force to expression. Nor was the choice to be strictly limited to words sanctioned by common usage. With Horace he agrees in commending new creations, though such coinages had been frowned upon by earlier authorities, Cornelius Celsus among their number. That such enterprise involved risks, more particularly in Latin, he is ready to concede; yet the risks, he maintains, were fully justified, while they would be also minimised if the new words were submitted in apologetic fashion, as was the way when making use of bold and daring metaphors.² Then, too, archaic words, properly used, were said to add something to style. They were said to give to expression a certain majesty and the effect of novelty, besides an old-world fragrance which Quintilian detected in Virgil's use of such forms. At the same time, added Quintilian, such archaisms were to be employed with the utmost discretion; since too frequent a use would savour of pedantry or affectation, and words dragged from the remote past (*ex ultimis tenebris*) would call for an interpreter.³ Thus does he warn against the use of "inkhorn" terms; "the oldest of the new, and the newest of the old" (*novorum optima... maxime vetera... veterum maxime nova*) is in general his prescription for the choice of words.⁴

With this then as his basis Quintilian turns to a consideration of the arrangement of words by way of elucidating the principles underlying an effective style. And following Aristotle, he insists on clearness as the first essential, on lucidity in the ordering of words, and on expression that is adequate and free from redundancy.⁵ Hence his condemnation of such things as ungainly parentheses, or long trailing sentences that end in obscurity, or again those ambiguities and brevities which he includes among the prevailing abuses of his day. And in yet another of those pregnant sentences, which add colour to his work, he gives it as his opinion that in speaking (or writing) our aim should be "not merely to enable a hearer (or reader) to

¹ I, 4, 4.² I, 5, 71; VIII, 3, 30.³ I, 6, 39; VIII, 3, 24.⁴ I, 6, 41.⁵ VIII, 2, 22-4.

understand, but to render it impossible for him not to understand" (*non, ut intellegere possit, sed, ne omnino possit non intellegere*).¹ At the same time while thus emphatic in asserting the need for clearness in style, Quintilian does not labour the point unduly. Like "Longinus", and probably for the same reasons, he is more concerned with the ornate aspects of style; and he therefore proceeds to deal at considerable length with details of ornament (*ornatus*), those devices which give grace and charm to literary expression. By way of preliminary, however, he first calls attention to certain faults to be avoided. They were faults arising mainly out of an ill-judged handling of words; and in the false effects he enumerates may clearly be seen not a few of the contemporary abuses. Some of them for instance resulted from the use of unsuitable words, as when ignoble words were employed in a setting of dignity, or extravagant terms for the expression of petty ideas. Or again, it might be the use of unnecessary, redundant words; "every word", states Quintilian, "which helps neither the sense nor the style must be regarded as faulty".² Then, too, there was the use of bombastic or luscious phrase which gave to expression an air of insincerity and affectation; or again, the use of incongruous mixtures, of words grand and commonplace, old and new, poetic and colloquial, resulting, as Quintilian puts it, in a monstrous effect like that of Horace's human head on a horse's neck.³

It is on the positive side of the subject, however, that Quintilian concentrates. And by way of justifying his procedure he explains that it is not enough to speak (or write) correctly and clearly, but that something more is needed for the creation of an elevated style. The first essential, he allows, is to form a clear idea of what it is intended to say, and then to express it adequately. But over and above this an added charm was necessary, an element of fine surprise resulting from the use of appropriate "ornament"; and to this aspect of the problem he devotes his main attention, passing in review the earlier rhetorical teaching and abstracting what he regards as most valuable for his purpose. It is here, however, that Quintilian appears least helpful from our modern point of view, becoming

¹ VIII, 2, 24.² VIII, 3, 55.³ VIII, 3, 60.

involved in technicalities which only confuse, and in hair-splitting distinctions of a pedantic kind. To his contemporaries his procedure may have been justified as an attempt to guide them through the mazes of rhetorical terminology, by supplying a rational summary of what was sound in the earlier teaching. Thus, not infrequently, he protests against the needless quibbling that went on. He states that he himself cared nothing for exactness of terminology provided his meaning was clear;¹ for those again who classified *sententiae* under ten heads he expressed nothing but scorn;² while elsewhere on points of doctrine where authorities differed he attempts to put forward some sort of solution. At the same time he himself is responsible in some measure for perpetuating the system by which the broad principles of style are overshadowed by masses of detail; and his treatment of "ornament" suffers greatly in consequence. The fact is that something less would have sufficed than his laborious account of those countless means of embellishment which the ingenuity of the rhetoricians had by this time accumulated; and since to follow him in his "bleak pageant" would be both tedious and profitless, such a proceeding forms no part of our present purpose.

Yet from his detailed analysis not a little that is valuable will be found to emerge. And concerning the use of those devices which add charm and brilliance to style he has much to say, including remarks, first, on some of the more general effects, and then on those of a more detailed kind due to Tropes and Figures. The more general effects, which in the first place engage his attention, are those which contribute to the emotional value of style. And it is not without its significance that first among the devices commended by Quintilian is that of *ἐνάργεια* or "vision", the vivid and animated representation of things by means of word-pictures.³ The aim of the device was in some sort an "imaginative" treatment of facts, which not only made for clearness, but also compelled attention by its vivid pictures; and its results were seen in the lively impression of truth conveyed by such image-forming. In the use of this device Cicero was said to be supreme; and while a reproduction of reality was

¹ VIII, 4, 15.² VIII, 5, 5.³ VIII, 3, 61.

aimed at, the use of fictitious incidents was also permitted in order to strengthen the impression of verisimilitude, thus involving in some measure the employment of the creative faculty. Nor was such treatment hard to attain. "Observe Nature closely and follow her" (*Naturam intueamur, hanc sequamur*),¹ such was the advice of Quintilian; and the injunction finds its counterpart in the modern precept to the effect that the poet should "write with his eye on the object". Closely related in its results was said to be the use of similes, which had also the effect of bringing things vividly before the eye; and of doing so, rapidly and in effortless fashion.² In the employment of this device, however, Quintilian had noted serious defects among his contemporaries; and he therefore calls attention to certain of its essential features. Thus he points out that the subject chosen for the purpose of comparison should be familiar and free from obscurity; it should be clearer than that which it was designed to illustrate, and this for obvious reasons. On the other hand, similes of a more remote kind had also their uses; they were said to produce the effect of novelty and to add an air of strangeness and sublimity. And whereas the former kind were recommended for use in prose, the latter were said to be best adapted for use in poetry. Less interesting perhaps are the remaining devices referred to under this head; as for instance, "emphasis" or "innuendo",³ the use of pregnant phrase in which more is implied than is actually expressed, or "amplification",⁴ in which a continuous series of words or phrases works up to a climax, or again, an unaffected simplicity, impressive in its neatness and delicacy.⁵ Of his remarks on *sententiae*, however, the same cannot be said. For here we have comments of the highest significance; and indeed nothing better illustrates his judicial treatment than his discussion on what was at the time regarded as "the chief if not the sole ornament of style".⁶ By this device was meant the use of paradoxical or epigrammatic turns of phrase often embodying reflexions of a striking kind; and Quintilian, while noting that it was a practice rare in ancient days, adds also that it had become an abuse of recent

¹ viii, 3, 71. Cf. vol. i, 104.² viii, 3, 72 ff.³ viii, 3, 83.⁴ viii, 4.⁵ viii, 3, 37.⁶ viii, 5, 1 ff.; xii, 10, 48.

years, and that authorities were divided in their opinions as to its real value. Among the chief abuses was said to be the employment of epigrams embodying a play upon words; or again of reflexions purporting to be of universal application, which were nothing more than flimsy statements made in support of a given point of view. The chief defect, however, was the prodigality of their employment. They were used lavishly, indiscriminately, and foolishly; and with this most of Quintilian's contemporaries would have agreed. As to their excessive use, it was a procedure to be deprecated for artistic reasons. For not only would their peculiar charm as a result be lost, but expression would become jerky, a series of detached sentences, glittering, it is true, but lacking in cohesion. And their effect would be that "of sparks flashing through smoke, rather than the clear light that comes from a steady flame".¹ On the other hand, he does not condemn their use entirely. He sees in them a valuable ingredient of style, the very eyes (*oculos*), so to speak, of eloquence; but then, as he points out, the body is not made up of eyes. Moreover, he is conscious of further artistic values; their forceful character, their memorable form by reason of their brevity, and their persuasive quality resulting from the pleasing surprise they give. So that altogether he does not scruple to commend their use to his readers; provided, that is, they were employed discreetly, without irrelevance or excess.

Turning now from ornamental devices of the more general kind, Quintilian proceeds to deal with the more detailed effects bound up with Tropes and Figures. And here, broadly speaking, what he has in mind are those artistic changes in the meaning or the form of words and phrases which have as their object the elucidation or the enrichment of expression. It is true that he distinguishes between Tropes and Figures, and the Figures he also divides into Figures of speech and Figures of thought, while decrying the further needless sub-divisions then current. Yet, even so, the distinctions he adopts are not rigidly maintained, his treatment in this respect being somewhat confused and unconvincing. And the only conclusion to be drawn from Quintilian's procedure in this part of the work is that he was

¹ VIII, 5, 29.

reviewing the routine teaching of contemporary rhetoricians with the object of reducing it to more rational form. Hence his discursive treatment of these ornamental devices; among the more familiar of the Tropes treated being metaphor, epithet, periphrasis, allegory, hyperbaton, and hyperbole, while his Figures range from such devices as apostrophe, personification, antithesis and irony to the more mysterious operations known as epanodos, paradiastole, hypotyposis and the rest. Some of his occasional remarks, it is true, are not without their interest; as when, for instance, he describes metaphor as "the supreme ornament of style",¹ or when he states that the epithet (or decorative adjective) was justified only when it added something definite to the sense²—a point of interest to modern readers, in view of the abuse of the redundant epithet by English poets of the eighteenth century. At the same time what is more important than his remarks on each individual device is his teaching in general as to their value and use; and here once again he brings to bear the light of common sense on the bewildering complexities with which the rhetoricians had by this time enveloped the whole question. That Figures were necessary for the creation of an attractive style he is firmly convinced. They were departures from the normal way of saying things, fertilisers of language, which relieved the tedium of everyday speech and transformed it into a vehicle for the highest and loftiest truth. Stealing their way secretly into the minds of readers they excited emotion, made for clearness and elegance, gave to expression variety and beauty, while adding to style generally an element of novelty and fine surprise. Yet such Figures, he maintains, were no fixed things. The figurative expression of one generation became naturally the normal idiom of the generation that followed;³ so that in the ordinary sense of the term everything was expressed by Figures. And in this connexion he recalls Apollodorus's statement (derived from Caecilius) that the rules laid down for Figures were to him meaningless.⁴ Hence Quintilian's frequent strictures on the mechanical treatment of the subject, and in particular his revolt against the wholesale preservation of Greek nomenclature.

¹ VIII, 2, 6.² VIII, 6, 41.³ IX, 3, 1.⁴ IX, 1, 12.

Many of the accepted Figures, he suggests, were no Figures at all; there were no limits to the craze for inventing technical terms; and he recognises only those devices which served some psychological purpose or added to expression some definite artistic grace. Nor does he fail to add a word of warning about their employment. He explains that they must be discreetly used and with a sense of decorum; they must be in keeping not only with the subject-matter but also with the circumstances of their employment. For to do otherwise would be to destroy their charm, and to create an air of insincerity; "no one", he adds, "can tolerate the expression of sorrow or anger in neat antitheses".¹

There yet remains to be considered the third and last section of Quintilian's treatment of "the arrangement of words". He has already treated of the need for clearness in style; and the part played by "ornament" in heightening stylistic effects. He now proceeds to deal with the effects resulting from a skilful placing of words, those factors of "artistic structure" which added to the vitality and beauty of expression; and here we have what is perhaps one of the most illuminating parts of his work. As he himself notes, the subject had already been treated by others, by Cicero and Dionysius more especially, but also by Horace and "Longinus", in more summary fashion. And now Quintilian reverts to the more inclusive treatment, in order as he states to meet certain objections which had been raised to Cicero's theory in general. That due regard for verbal setting had been a comparatively late development he is prepared to admit; though he cannot agree with Cicero that even such early writers as Lysias or Herodotus or Thucydides had been wholly ignorant of these things. At any rate he is convinced that not a little of the vigour and charm of all good writing was the outcome of the apt placing of words; and he proceeds to elaborate his ideas for the consideration of his Roman readers.

In the first place he emphasises the importance of placing words in the most effective order in the sentence; and he forthwith scouts the notion of the existence of fixed rules on the subject, such as for instance the rules requiring that nouns

¹ IX, 3, 102.

should precede verbs, and verbs adverbs, or that adjectives and pronouns should follow the nouns with which they are connected.¹ All such arbitrary laws he dismisses as sheer pedantry, seeing that a reversal of the order proposed often produced excellent results. Nor was the natural order always the best for artistic purposes; for ordinary speech embodied much that was discordant and disjointed, so that some rearrangement was called for on aesthetic grounds. The fact was that in his opinion the most effective order was determined by the formal qualities of the words themselves. "In writing", states Quintilian,² "we build as with unhewn stone; we cannot hew or polish our words so as to make them fit compactly." And therefore, he goes on to add, we must place them in accordance with the nature of things, postponing some, advancing others, and assigning to each the setting productive of the most pleasing results. This then is the basic principle he lays down regarding word-order in a sentence; though he is careful to add that the happiest effects follow when the natural order is preserved as closely as possible. And for the rest he supplies one further practical hint. It is often well, he states, to conclude a sentence with a verb; for it is in verbs after all that the real strength of language lies, while the concluding word is most strongly impressed on the mind of the hearer (or reader).³

Apart from sentence-order, however, there were also to be considered the more intimate relations between words themselves and the happiest ways of combining them. And here it is a plea for euphony in the ordering of words that Quintilian is making.⁴ In general he maintains that all harshness or discord produced by the clash of vowels or consonants should be sedulously avoided; particularly such ugly combinations as *a* and *o* or *s* and *s* (*x*) at the juncture of words. At the same time while such hiatus was normally to be avoided, the law was by no means to be regarded as absolute. The followers of Isocrates, in Quintilian's opinion, had made of it a fetish; and there were circumstances under which the law could be safely disregarded. Thus both Demosthenes and Cicero were said to have exercised a wise discretion in the matter; and whereas excessive anxiety

¹ ix, 4, 24 ff.² viii, 6, 62.³ ix, 4, 26.⁴ ix, 4, 32 ff.

to avoid hiatus tended to hamper expression, its occasional use according to Cicero gave an air of pleasing carelessness, as if the writer was more concerned with matter than with manner. Nor was this the only counsel given by Quintilian in respect of euphony. It was a fault, he states, to crowd too many monosyllables together, since a jerky effect resulted; while too many long syllables in succession tended to retard the movement. Moreover, to conclude a number of successive sentences with the same cadences or inflexions was apt to produce a monotonous effect. And finally he warns his readers against employing as the first syllables of one word the last syllables of the word preceding; a fault of which even Cicero had been guilty in his much-quoted line, "*O fortunatam natam me consule Romam*".¹

Most important of all however are Quintilian's remarks on the need for arranging words so as to obtain those rhythmical effects appropriate to all good prose.² And here he is following in the train of Aristotle and Cicero, Dionysius and others, who had maintained the essentially rhythmical character of all prose utterance. As his predecessors had done, he distinguishes clearly between rhythm and metre. "A complete verse in prose", he states, "has an unpleasing effect"; and he condemns the attempts of certain grammarians to force prose into definite metres as if it were a sort of lyric poetry. On the other hand, he is equally emphatic as to the need for unfailing rhythm; and he recalls Cicero's statement that "the whole of prose structure consists of rhythm"; and again, that same orator's explanation of Demosthenes's thunderbolts as being largely due to his forceful, whirling rhythms. That such rhythmical effects in prose were harder to manipulate than the metrical effects in verse he readily allows. Each line in verse, he points out, is uniform, its movement being determined by a definite pattern, whereas in prose the movement varies from phrase to phrase in the freest fashion. Nevertheless, the presence of rhythm he asserts to be indispensable. It is needed at the beginning of a sentence to win the attention of a reader and at the end to form an effective close; while even in the looser epistolary style it is by no means non-existent, though there the structural con-

¹ IX, 4, 41.

² IX, 4, 45 ff.

nexion being less rigid, it is subtler in kind and harder to detect.¹ Hence the special practical injunctions supplied by Quintilian at this stage; his advice, for instance, that to obtain the requisite rhythm it would sometimes be expedient to employ additional words provided they were not redundant, or again, to omit others that were not essential to the sense. Then, too, he asserts quite definitely that all metrical feet have their place in prose.² In this he recognises that he is at variance with earlier authorities who, following Aristotle, had declared that certain rhythms were unsuitable for prose; dactylic for instance being too dignified, trochaic too impetuous, and iambic too commonplace. Yet he insists on all alike being constituents of "that other harmony of prose"; elements which, with their variations of long and short syllables, gave to prose something of its infinite variety. In prose of the grander kind, he adds, long syllables would predominate, in lighter passages short syllables; yet all were necessary for adequate expression and for the free rhythmical movement of the best prose. Nor does he omit to add a word of advice as to how these effects were best come by. He has, it is true, no fixed rules to offer; in the matter of rhythm, he affirms, the ear is the sole judge, selecting, approving, and rejecting in accordance with the nature of the theme. Nor was the process one of a meticulous measurement of feet, a painful elaboration of what Lucilius had termed "a mosaic of phrases". Such methods, Quintilian states, only cooled the passions and cramped the expression; whereas the true stimulus and guidance came from natural promptings, from the instinctive feeling of the ear for quantity and rhythm. And lastly, he adds a caveat which is never far from his thoughts—the need in this matter for a concealment of art.³ The injunction is one that is frequently hinted at elsewhere;⁴ it figures in his teaching as one of his basic principles. But nowhere is it more necessary than in connexion with these rhythmical effects, the very essence of which is their inevitable and spontaneous character.

Such then is what might perhaps be called the nucleus of

¹ IX, 4, 19.

³ IX, 3, 102.

² IX, 4, 79ff.

⁴ Cf. II, 5, 8; IV, 2, 127; VIII, 3, 2.

Quintilian's theory of style; a demand for the choice of the best words and their most effective arrangement, involving an exploitation of all the resources of language whether of clearness or novelty or beauty or music—a theory not essentially different from that of a later age according to which style was described as “the best words in the best order”.¹ Yet Quintilian is under no delusion that this was all that was involved in style. As he himself states, to devote oneself wholly to the study of words was a futile and crippling business; and he therefore supplements his basic doctrine with some further principles which were the outcome of an approach to his subject from other angles. Thus, in the first place, he submits a number of precepts of an eminently practical kind; though he warns his readers that there were graces which were beyond the calculation of art. With regard to such matters he states that no clear guidance could be given; “we must rely on feeling and take nature for our guide”.² And here he has seemingly in mind that element of “happy chance” which goes to the creation of beauty of expression—a point previously made by Agathon, and more recently by Simylus.³ Apart from this, however, he has not a few injunctions to give which are none the less important because most of them were commonplaces at the time. For one thing he insists with Horace that style must grow naturally out of subject-matter.⁴ The subject-matter, he asserts, will ordinarily suggest the best mode of expression; there must be no hunting after words, no glaring artifice. For in the one case there will result the natural beauty of healthy bodies, with their warm colouring, their symmetry and grace; in the other a meretricious splendour which only defaces. Then, too, closely bound up with this is the importance he attaches to *decorum* as a principle of general application.⁵ According to this doctrine style should vary in keeping with the speaker, the occasion, the circumstances; since, as Quintilian points out, all “ornament” owes its effect not so much to its inherent qualities as to its appropriateness, to the conditions under which it is employed. Hence the need for avoiding incongruities, and for the exercise

¹ Cf. Coleridge, *Table Talk*, vi, 293.

² ix, 4, 120.

³ See vol. i, 21–2, 179–80.

⁴ viii, Pr. 21.

⁵ xi, 1.

of restraint in all forms of expression. And here again was a matter in which no rules were possible; it was something that should be left to the individual taste and judgment. Furthermore, Quintilian utters a warning against a fatal fluency in writing, and urges the importance of "correctness" and self-criticism.¹ There are times, he grants, when we may "spread our sails before a following breeze"; but caution is nevertheless necessary in order to avoid what is bombastic or commonplace, disorderly or discordant. And this is best achieved by careful self-criticism, and by following more especially the advice of Horace to refrain for a time and then to view the work from a fresh and impersonal standpoint.² "Write quickly", he adds, "and you will never write well; write well and you will soon write quickly" (*cito scribendo non fit ut bene scribatur; bene scribendo fit ut cito*).³ At the same time he is aware that the quest for "correctness" is not without its dangers. There are those, he explains, who are morbidly self-critical; who agonise over syllables, are never content, but have an itch for amending what well might stand. Such excessive zeal for "correctness", however, he unreservedly condemns; it not only mutilates the style but is apt to lead also to atrophy and silence. "The file", he urges, "should polish our work, not wear it away" (*opus poliat lima non exerat*).⁴

Of all the practical injunctions which Quintilian submits to his readers, none is however of greater interest than that relating to "imitation", the process which was to become the watchword of the Renaissance. What he has to say on the subject was probably based on the work of Dionysius or some common source; though this does not detract from the importance of his pronouncement. Indeed, in view of the fact that Dionysius's extant remarks are but fragmentary, while nowhere else do we find a coherent statement on the theme, the value of Quintilian's treatment can scarcely be overrated. It supplies what would otherwise have been a gap in our knowledge of contemporary theory; and as such it therefore calls for some amount of detailed consideration. Concerning the general principle of "imitation" in the first place he has something to

¹ x, 3, 5. ² x, 4, 2. Cf. A. P. 386 ff. ³ x, 3, 10 (tr. H. E. B.). ⁴ x, 4, 4.

say. He notes, for instance, that some of the earlier authorities had included it among their essential requirements for the attainment of skill in writing; thus adding to the demand for native gifts, a knowledge of art, and exercise (*natura, ars, exercitatio*), a further demand for imitation of the best writers.¹ And with this requirement he is in general agreement. It is both natural and expedient, he holds, to imitate what we admire in others; and in all arts, he adds, such imitation is specially valuable.² At the same time he is careful to explain that in the process of imitation the nicest judgment was needed. And here his commentary becomes one of an illuminating kind; he succeeds in presenting a doctrine vastly different from that which prevailed at the Renaissance, when imitation stood for little more than slavish copying. He insists, to begin with, that only the best writers were to be imitated, and that they were to be imitated with discernment and judgment.³ In his own time, he declares, not a few decadent writers were taken as models; while oftentimes it was the defects, and not the merits, of the best writers that were being copied. And as illustrations of this he points to those among his contemporaries who took insipidity of thought and crudity of form to be the main features of the ancient Roman way of writing; to others again who, eschewing ornament, prided themselves on their Attic manner; while there were also others who thought that obscurity and abruptness were the best that Thucydides had to offer, or that tame and colourless writing was necessarily Ciceronian, provided that the periods were sufficiently long. Yet all this, Quintilian protests, was but a false conception of imitation; it was necessary above all to imitate with understanding, and with a clear sense of what was good and bad in style. Then, too, he has something to say concerning the conditions and methods of imitation; as when, for instance, he demands that imitation should be attempted along congenial lines and in conformity with the capacity and bent of the individual writer.⁴ One object of imitation, as he understood it, was to assist in the development of a writer's native powers; and for one whose talent lay in the direction of simplicity and

¹ III, 5, 1.² X, 2, 1 ff.³ X, 2, 14 ff.⁴ X, 2, 19 ff.

elegance, to imitate a model that was rugged and vigorous could only result in a crippling or a thwarting of those powers. On the other hand he affirms that imitation should not be limited to any one style, since various circumstances called for different styles.¹ Nor was imitation to be regarded as a matter of mere words.² What was really to be imitated were the methods of this or that writer; his judgment, his arrangement, his appeal to the emotions, as well as his vocabulary, his use of Figures and the rest. Such a process was obviously something far removed from mere formal copying; and if Quintilian's conception falls short of "Longinus's" brilliant exposition of the term, it is at least free from the misleading interpretations of a later day.

The most significant element in Quintilian's conception of "imitation" has, however, yet to be mentioned; and that is, that, despite the importance he attaches to the process, he is emphatic in adding that "imitation alone is not enough" (*imitatio per se ipsa non sufficit*),³ that its real function lies not in the reproduction of earlier methods of expression but in conducting to the discovery of new effects and to the development of style in general. And here, it may be remarked, he is seemingly at one with Horace, with whom "imitation" stood for much the same thing.⁴ Of the limitations of mere mechanical imitation Quintilian speaks with some force. At best he describes it as a difficult operation. For while the formal excellences of an artistic performance may with care be reproduced, the subtler and more vital qualities are more elusive and defy imitation; so that a perfect artistic copy becomes almost an impossibility. Nor, he goes on to add, would the results be really worth while, even if complete success in copying were possible; for an imitation is necessarily inferior to its original, just as shadow is to substance. The achievement would in fact be no more valuable than those pictures produced by copying with the help of "the ruler and measuring rod" (*mensuris ac lineis*).⁵ Hence to Quintilian imitation as an end in itself was no ideal to follow. It was rather a means to further artistic

¹ x, 2, 23.² x, 2, 27.³ x, 2, 4 ff.⁴ See p. 79 *supra*.⁵ x, 2, 6; see H. E. Butler, *op. cit.* note.

advance, an incentive to improve on earlier achievement; and this, he notes, had been the common practice in all human activities. Otherwise the highest flights in Roman poetry would still have been those of Livius Andronicus; and men, as he puts it, would still have been sailing on rafts.

Nor can the significance of this attitude on the part of Quintilian be easily missed. It points clearly to his grasp of the principle of artistic development and to a theory of art far removed from the static conception of later times, with its intricate code of fixed rules and standards. And this he emphasises more than once in connexion with style, which he holds to be capable of development from the very nature of things. In fact he looks forward with confidence to the working-out of new stylistic effects, arguing that Nature does not forbid the attainment of perfection in art, that all artistic advance is the work of time, and that moreover it is foolish to suppose that what has not hitherto been done cannot therefore be done.¹ And this he supports by an appeal to historical fact, explaining that in all arts there had been developments, arising out of different conditions of time and place, as well as from variations in individual tastes and ideals.² In painting and sculpture he shows this to have been true; and in oratory also he traces similar changes, from the crudities of Cato down to the more cultured performances of later days. Hence there can be no doubt as to Quintilian's position in this matter. Inspired by a vision of fresh possibilities in expression, he refuses to be limited by past methods and achievements, or to be confined to the beaten track (*unam orbitam*) where progress was limited to "the pace of a tight-rope walker" (*per funes ingredientium tarditatem*).³ Nor is he a believer in the doctrine of *tout est dit*, any more than in the theory that there was one way, and only one way, in which a thing could properly be said. If that were so, he argues, future development was indeed ruled out; whereas he states it to be his conviction that infinite possibilities remained, "the methods of expression still available being innumerable; so that the last word on style could never be said" (*de quo numquam dicta erunt omnia*).⁴

¹ XII, 11, 25 ff.

² XII, 10, 1 ff.

³ II, 13, 16.

⁴ II, 13, 17.

And here again Quintilian has some practical comments to make; as when he suggests for instance that style should develop in accordance with contemporary taste, or again in conformity with the genius of the language. Thus he allows that some concession should be made to changes of taste; to the demand, for example, in his own day for more striking and emotional utterance.¹ Cicero, he maintains, had taken into account the taste of his audiences; and he, for his part, was prepared to approve of the use of epigrams and *sententiae*, provided they were not overdone. The device, it was true, had not been commonly employed by the Greeks, but it had its uses in giving point and sparkle to style; and he therefore commends its employment with discretion. "The toga", as he puts it, "should not be shabby, but it need not be of silk." Then, too, he advises his countrymen that in attempting to develop their style they should keep in mind the nature of their language, its peculiarities and disabilities as compared with that of the Greeks. In general he states that Latin words had neither the richness, the variety, nor the charm of Greek words.² They were harsher in sound, their accents were less pleasing, and they contained many discordant syllables, such as those ending in *b* or *d* or *m*, the "mooring" (*ugiens*) letter, as he calls it. So that altogether it had to be recognised that the language of Rome was incapable of that harmony and grace which were the attributes of Greek and more particularly of Attic Greek. At the same time he is far from despairing of the future of Latin style; and he urges that the shortcomings of the medium should serve as an incentive to more serious efforts. To a consciousness of this deficiency he ascribes the increasing attention paid to rhythmical effects by Latin writers—a branch of study in which they had surpassed the Greeks.³ And for the rest, it was necessary to aim at development along lines that were likely to be fruitful. Thus if harmony and grace were in some measure denied to Romans, there were other effects that were possible and acceptable; and these were to be the goal of future efforts. "We cannot", he writes, "be as delicate (*graciles*) as the Greeks, then let us be more vigorous. We are beaten in subtlety, then let us prevail

¹ XII, 10, 45 ff.² XII, 10, 27 ff.³ IX, 4, 145.

by sheer weight. And if with the Greeks the sense of touch is surer (*proprietas certior*), then let us surpass them in richness (*copia*)."¹ Here then was advice of a useful and far-reaching kind. It was a recognition of the fact that the main characteristics of style in any one language are in part determined by the literary qualities of that language; and it was the first time for that fact to be clearly revealed.

In what has now been said will be found to be included the main substance of Quintilian's theory of style; his fundamental requirements in the first place, together with numerous practical injunctions of a valuable kind. Less important perhaps, though not without their interest, are further incidental remarks of his, which, while they are mostly conventional in kind, nevertheless throw light on certain other aspects of his artistic theory; and as such at this stage call at least for passing mention. Thus there are places in which he does little more than subscribe to the current orthodox theory; as when, for instance, he states that the orator (or artist in words) must be a good man,² or again, that the perfect orator should in general study the workings of nature and reason and should draw on the precepts of philosophy.³ The latter precept bears witness to the influence of Cicero; but it is submitted by Quintilian with something less than Cicero's enthusiasm, owing to changed conditions. The study of philosophy, as he states,⁴ was being neglected by orators in his own day, since philosophy no longer concerned itself with the world of action but had returned to the porches and the schools. Then, too, in his treatment of *decorum* he so far conforms to current ideas as to approve of the classification of style in accordance with set types of human nature.⁵ He rightly maintains that, as a general principle, style should be in keeping with the character of a speaker (or writer). But when he goes on to add that mildness and restraint should characterise the style of old men, that floridity and daring should be features of youth, or again that soldiers should write simply and philosophers austere, he is then suggesting distinctions of a factitious kind, and giving countenance to a theory that was to have disastrous effects in

¹ XII, 10, 36.² I, Pr. 29; I, 2, 3; XII, I, I.³ XII, 2, 4.⁴ XII, 2, 8.⁵ XI, I, 31 ff.

the later history of criticism. On the other hand greater independence is shown in his attitude towards the conventional threefold division of style into what was known as the plain, the grand or forcible, and the intermediate or florid styles.¹ The classification was one which had been adopted by Cicero, Dionysius and others; and Quintilian in his turn gives it a general approval, while reminding his readers of its main features. Thus he points out that the three styles were calculated to attain the three main aims of a speaker (or writer);² the plain style being best suited for teaching, the grand style for stirring the emotions, and the intermediate style for giving delight. He moreover professes to detect in Homer representatives of the three styles, in Menelaus, Ulysses, and Nestor respectively; and if any one style was to be adopted, the grand style with its forceful overpowering effects was the one recommended. All such doctrine was in accordance with the contemporary teaching. And there is this further to be said for such classification, that it helped to focus attention on some of the salient characteristics of style, while it also provided a convenient system for grouping the various orators and writers. Yet Quintilian is not satisfied that such a method was the best way of handling the subject. As he proceeds to point out, eloquence cannot be limited to any three styles;³ it does not admit of such clear-cut divisions, but consists rather of countless varieties with many qualities in common, and oftentimes fine shades of difference. Nor again could all writers be forced into these three categories, seeing that each was possessed of his own peculiar genius, and made use of all styles more or less in accordance with circumstances. In this way then does Quintilian challenge the conventional methods; he attempts to bring back the study of style from the artificiality of the threefold division on to the more rational lines laid down by Aristotle. And lastly, something must here be said concerning Quintilian's remarks on humour: a valuable seasoning, as he explains, in all expression, yet one most difficult to analyse or even to discuss on account of its elusive character. What he has to say is for the most part in keeping with the Aristotelian tradition as

¹ XII, 10, 58ff.² See p. 264 *supra*.³ XII, 10, 66.

represented by Cicero and the author of the *Tractatus Coislinianus*; and he follows them both in stating that "laughter has its basis in some kind or other of deformity or ugliness",¹ and that moreover it is excited by either actions or words.² At the same time he asserts that humour is primarily the product of natural gifts and opportunity; and that while it is not wholly independent of art, it nevertheless does not admit of the prescription of rules. He therefore limits himself to some general observations which are not without their interest; while he also endeavours to clear up points of terminology by distinguishing between such terms as *urbanus*, *venustus*, *salsus*, *facetus*, and *iocosus*. Among the more interesting of his remarks are those relating to the art of successful jesting. Jokes, he asserts, must always be good-humoured, never directed against the unfortunate, always in keeping with time and place, and carrying with them an air of spontaneity. The neatest form of humour, he adds,³ is that which depends for its success on the element of surprise, by deceiving anticipation or taking another's words in a different sense from what was intended; while simulation or the pretence of having a certain opinion, and dissimulation, the pretence of not understanding another's meaning, are also effective. In short, the essence of all humour, he states, consists in "a distortion of the true and natural meaning of words";⁴ and brevity, he reminds us, is the soul of wit.⁵

With this then we have concluded our survey of Quintilian's theorising; and we now turn to consider another aspect of his critical work, namely, his literary judgments which are for the most part to be found in the well-known first chapter of the tenth Book of his treatise. What he here attempts to provide is a sort of supplement to his theorising, a course of reading for intending orators, which would help to improve their style. And since, unlike some of his contemporaries, he regards all literature as helpful for that purpose—all forms of good writing whether in prose or verse having in his opinion certain principles in common⁶—he passes rapidly in review the better part of existing literature, thus supplying a critical summary of the

¹ vi, 3, 8.² vi, 3, 22.³ vi, 3, 84 ff.⁴ vi, 3, 89.⁵ vi, 3, 45.⁶ x, 2, 22.

literature of Greece and Rome during their classical periods. As the framework for his exposition he adopts the arrangement of Dionysius in his work *On Imitation*; so that his main divisions are poetry, history, oratory, and philosophy. At the same time it is not without its significance that he also makes use of further sub-divisions, treating poetry under the heads of epic, lyric, comic, tragic, elegiac, and satiric. And here incidentally we have an early application of the doctrine of the "kinds", according to which each branch of literature was said to have its own laws and peculiar excellences (*sua cuique proposita lex suus cuique decor est*)¹—a doctrine which was to play a large and unfortunate part in later criticism. Within this framework, therefore, he proceeds to comment on the outstanding writers from Homer down to his own contemporaries. Of epic poetry² Homer is described as the fountain head; and attention is called to his sublimity, his sense of propriety, the versatility of his style, and his unfailing mastery of all the emotions. Then follow brief references to Hesiod as representative of the middle style, to Antimachus vigorous though wanting in art, to Apollonius mediocre but correct, and Aratus lifeless and prosaic; while passing mention is also made of the elegiac poets Callimachus and Philetas, as well as of Archilochus greatest of iambic poets, forceful in invective. Of lyric poets³ Pindar is said to be the greatest by reason of the magnificence of his diction and thought; though Stesichorus, happy in his themes, is also described as a great, if somewhat uncontrolled, genius. Alcaeus is further commended in Horatian phrase for his "lyre of gold" (*aureo plectro*), though descending at times to amorous themes; while Simonides, simple and decorous in diction, is said to excel in pathos. Concerning the Old Comedy⁴ he has rather less to say, though what he says is of definite interest. As its chief exponents he mentions Aristophanes, Eupolis, and Cratinus; and he claims for it the distinction of being practically the only form of Greek poetry in which the genuine grace of Attic diction had been preserved. He further commends it for its vigorous attacks on vice; while in the loftiness and elegance of its style he sees the nearest approach to oratorical excellence.

¹ x, 2, 22.² x, 1, 46.³ x, 1, 61.⁴ x, 1, 65.

And similar praise is awarded to Menander as representative of the New Comedy; his wonderful representation of actual life, his skill in characterisation, and the richness of his style are said to render him a perfect model for orators. In the remarks on tragedy¹ which follow, Quintilian is strangely inadequate. He states that Aeschylus's lofty style occasionally fell into bombast; that innovations were made by both Sophocles and Euripides; that whereas the former was the more sublime, the latter was more oratorical, in style; and that Euripides was supreme in the matter of pathos. But this is practically all; and, being obvious commonplaces, they do not take us far. Turning then to Greek prose, and first to the historians,² Quintilian has something to say about both Thucydides and Herodotus. He compares them briefly as stylists; the one, terse, compact, and excelling in vigour, the other, pleasing, diffuse, and possessed of the greater charm. And with a mere mention of Theopompus, Philistus and others, he passes on to the orators,³ choosing five out of the canon of ten referred to by Caecilius. Of these Demosthenes is said to be the greatest; vigorous and compact in style, with nothing redundant, excessive, or flat, he is said to be the perfect model for orators. Then there was Aeschines more diffuse and less restrained; Hyperides with undoubted charm but of lighter metal; Lysias supreme in his elegant simplicity; Isocrates elaborate and smooth, but over-meticulous in his care for rhythm; and reference is also made to the later Demetrius Phalereus with whom Attic oratory was said to have begun its decline. And lastly there were the philosophers,⁴ of whom Plato came first, who was said to excel in acuteness of intellect and in his divine gift of expression, Homeric in its quality. With him are grouped Xenophon, unrivalled in charm, the gift of the Graces; Aristotle, too, who is praised for his vast learning and the sweetness of his style (*eloquendi suavis*); and finally, Theophrastus, endowed with a brilliance that Aristotle had termed "divine".

Leaving now the Greeks, Quintilian continues his sketch with an account of the Romans; and to Virgil he assigns the first place among Latin epic poets.⁵ In point of merit Virgil is said

¹ x, 1, 66.² x, 1, 73.³ x, 1, 76.⁴ x, 1, 81.⁵ x, 1, 85.

to rank next to Homer; in fact, nearer to Homer (according to Domitius Afer) than he is to the next best poet. And to this is added the further comment that, whereas Homer was the greater genius, Virgil was the greater artist, in that his task was harder—a distinction that became a commonplace in later ages. Of the remaining epic poets Quintilian has little to say; though Ennius at least is described as worthy of reverence, the reverence paid to some aged oak, venerable but not beautiful. Ovid, too, is said to be good in parts; but then he is “wanton” (*lascivus*) and too much given to admiring his own cleverness (*nimum amator ingenii sui*). Lucan again is described as fiery, impassioned, and distinguished in a high degree for his epigrammatic utterance—all qualities of oratorical rather than poetic value. And for the rest, Varro of Atax is mentioned, though his diction is said to be limited; while passing reference is also made to a number of contemporaneous poets. In elegy,¹ on the other hand, the Romans are said to have rivalled the Greeks. And of these elegiac poets Tibullus is described as the most terse and elegant, though some, we are told, would prefer Propertius; and included in this same category are also Ovid and Gallus. Then comes the claim that in satire as a whole the Romans were unrivalled (*satira quidem tota nostra est*);² and the dictum is one that later scholarship has endorsed with due limitations. Concerning Lucilius, the earliest of such poets, different estimates, it is stated, were current at the time. Thus some enthusiasts maintained him to be the greatest of all poets; whereas Horace for one held that his style was turbid and that his work was not free from unpleasant features. With both of these estimates, however, Quintilian disagrees; and is content with praising the learning of the poet, as well as that frankness of speech which gave to his satire its point and abounding wit (*abundantia salis*). To Horace on the other hand he would assign the highest place, his style being terser and purer; in Persius too he recognises a satirist of parts; while worthy of mention were also the older satires of Terentius Varro, the most learned of Romans though no great artist. Of lyrical poets³

¹ x, i, 93.

² *Ibid.*; see W. Rennie, *Class. Rev.* xxxvi (1922), p. 21.

³ x, i, 96.

Quintilian has but little to say. Horace in his opinion is almost the only one worth reading; and he is said to soar aloft, to be lively and charming, while in the diversity of his Figures and his daring felicity of phrase (*verbis felicissime audax*) there was also much to be praised. Concerning tragedy,¹ strangely enough, Quintilian has rather more to say; both Accius and Pacuvius being commended for their use of *sententiae*, the nobility of their expression, and the dignity of their characterisation. At the same time they were said to be lacking in elegance; and whereas Accius was in general regarded as the more vigorous, to Pacuvius was usually ascribed the greater learning. Then, too, Varius was said to have achieved success in the tragic vein, his *Thyestes* being held to challenge comparison with the finest Greek work; while Ovid's *Medea*, so Quintilian thought, also showed that poet at his best. Equally unexpected is however the statement concerning comedy,² namely, that it was in that field that Latin literature was most defective; and this in spite of the laudatory estimates of earlier authorities. Thus Caecilius, we learn, had been the subject of much praise; while Stilo had stated that if the Muses had chosen to speak Latin they would have used the language of Plautus. Quintilian, it is true, allows that the work of Terence was in the highest degree elegant; that Afranius, too, had excelled in Roman comedy, though much given to obscenity. And yet his general verdict is definitely unfavourable; Roman writers, in his opinion, had utterly failed to reproduce the charm and grace of ancient Greek comedy. After this he turns to consider the prose-writers, and first the historians,³ of whom Sallust and Livy were chief. The former he praises for his unique rapidity, the latter for his charm in narrative, his eloquent speeches and emotional appeal; and both, he claims, had rivalled the Greeks, Sallust being confidently ranked with Thucydides and Livy with Herodotus. Nor, adds Quintilian, were Roman orators⁴ unworthy of like comparison. And Cicero in particular he would set against the greatest of the Greeks, supporting his statement in the meantime by a masterly appreciation of that orator. Then, too, there were others with claims to distinction

¹ x, I, 97.

² x, I, 99.

³ x, I, 101.

⁴ x, I, 105.

in this kind; Asinius Pollio and Messala both polished and precise, Calvus hypercritical perhaps but grave and chaste in style, Cassius Severus witty and greatly gifted but somewhat wanting in judgment, as well as Domitius Afer and a host of others among his contemporaries. And lastly there were the philosophers¹ of whom but few, he confesses, could be called distinguished in style, though Cicero here again is claimed as a rival to Plato; and with some notable remarks on the younger Seneca as stylist Quintilian brings at length his survey to a close.

Such then are the main details of Quintilian's critical sketch; and from the first it becomes plain that, in view of his specific purpose, what he really has in mind is not so much literary appreciation in the wider sense of the term, as a discussion of stylistic qualities, the value of this or that writer for rhetorical training. And this is not confined to his treatment of prose-writers; it is characteristic of his remarks on the poets as well. Thus he counts it to Homer's credit that in his work all the rules of oratory are illustrated; Theocritus and Lucretius he practically ignores as irrelevant to his purpose; and everywhere it is the manner of expression, the use of Figures, *sententiae*, and the like, that for all practical purposes monopolise the attention. Nor is this the only limitation that marks his treatment; for what he gives, as a rule, are not reasoned estimates but brief formal comments for which parallels might be found in most of the earlier rhetorical works. And besides the form of his remarks he has also in many cases adopted their substance; a fact that is more particularly seen in his commentary on Greek writers, much of which is reminiscent of Cicero, Dionysius, and others. In treating of the Romans, it is true, he is more independent; for there tradition had less to offer in the way of ready-made estimates. But even there he draws freely on earlier authorities, when indeed he is not quoting merely current opinion. And in this way reference is made to the views of Horace and Seneca, Petronius and Domitius Afer; so that as a consequence much of what he says is of a second-hand, if not a hackneyed, kind. Apart from this, however, there are other features of his judgments which detract from their value;

¹ x, 1, 123.

such as for instance his patriotic bias, his obsession with the idea of rivalling the ancient Greeks, which sometimes leads him to exalt unduly the performances at Rome. Of genuine comparative criticism there is but little trace. Such comparisons as he makes are, with one exception, of a trite and superficial kind; and this is all the more to be regretted in view of the facilities offered by a survey which included both Greek and Roman writers. Nor are his judgments free from the disabilities bound up with all contemporary criticism; for he stands too near to the writers of Rome to be able to assess their value correctly or yet to place them in their proper perspective. Thus it is that the "lyrical" excellence of Catullus is entirely missed;¹ Lucretius is incidentally grouped with Macer; while such writers as Rabirius, Pedo, and Bassus receive more than their due measure of attention. The truth would therefore seem to be that this historical sketch has in general been overpraised in the past; possibly on account of the rarity of such comprehensive summaries. It may be urged that it supplies us with the accepted opinions on literature at the time, and that as such it has historical value. Yet it has also without doubt many serious defects. Its judgments are mostly of a conventional and cut-and-dried kind; they are wanting in insight, discrimination, and freshness; and altogether the appreciations are lacking in some of the essentials of sound aesthetic criticism.

While, however, such limitations are present in this first systematic effort at surveying the field of literature, at the same time there are also places, both in this chapter and elsewhere, where Quintilian is seen to greater advantage as a judicial critic. And this is notably the case in his comments on Cicero and the younger Seneca where his treatment is of a freer and more personal kind. Thus Cicero he defends against detractors both past and present;² against those who had previously censured him for his florid and uncontrolled style, as well as those later critics who had charged him with being both lifeless and dry. Both charges, Quintilian maintained, were equally

¹ Professor J. F. Mountford points out that Catullus, in spite of his "lyrical" feeling, had but little to do with lyric metres, and Quintilian's classification here is based entirely on form.

² XII, 10, 12.

groundless; and in a comparison with Demosthenes he succeeds in bringing out something of the real greatness of Cicero's achievement.¹ Thus in some respects, it was stated, both orators were alike: in their judgment, their skill in arrangement, and their appeal to the emotions. In the matter of style, however, there were said to be differences, Demosthenes being the more concentrated and incisive in his methods, Cicero the more diffuse and at times the more weighty; so that while from the one nothing could well be taken, to the other there was nothing that could successfully be added. Of the two Cicero was said to reveal the more natural art, though the achievement of Demosthenes being prior in time was in that sense the greater. And if Cicero owed much to the work of his great predecessor, he was said to owe still more to his own immortal genius. For in his work, it was added, was reproduced not only Demosthenes's force, but the richness (*copia*) of Plato and the charm of Isocrates as well; and all this was accomplished with the spontaneity and ease which revealed the master, and which made of Cicero a pattern for all to follow. Equally interesting are, however, Quintilian's remarks on the younger Seneca,² against whose influence as a stylist he had previously warned the younger generation. That his opposition had been due to no personal animus he carefully states, explaining that it had arisen out of the insidious effects of the Senecan manner on young writers, who, bewitched by the meretricious qualities of his style, had as a result imitated merely his defects. For his many excellences Quintilian expresses the highest admiration; he is generous in his praises of Seneca's quick and well-stored mind, his versatility, his untiring industry, and his denunciations of vice. At the same time he insists that he was a dangerous guide to follow; and this by reason of his fondness for the fantastic in expression, his constant striving after epigrammatic effects—features, adds Quintilian, which had impaired the value of his teaching while detracting as well from his dignity as a writer.

Nor are these appreciations the only places where Quintilian reveals his qualities as a judicial critic. In connexion with more

¹ X, I, 105-12.

² X, I, 125 ff.

than one of the current disputes he pronounces sane judgments, denouncing for example both the archaising and the modernist tendencies in their extreme forms, while indicating at the same time the merits and possibilities of each. Again, there are his strictures on the Atticist movement,¹ where he enlarges on the errors of those who arrogated to themselves the title of "Attic" on the score of their simplicity and frugality of expression. Following Cicero he points out that Atticism was not limited to any one style; that it was common to Lysias, Demosthenes, Isocrates, and the rest; and that, infinite in its variety, it was none other than the product of a keen and exact judgment, alive to all the factors that made for greatness in expression. And that he felt strongly on this particular point is suggested by his scathing reference to the Atticists of his day as a "coterie of withered and anaemic souls who were wont to conceal their weakness under a show of health".² Then, too, it must be noted that here and there in his judgments he gives evidence of his appreciation of the historical point of view. Thus the origin of the Asiatic style,³ he maintains, was to be sought for in the activities of an earlier stage. And he attributes it not so much to a defective knowledge of Greek in the various Asiatic centres as to the character of the Asiatic orators and their audiences, who with their love of ostentation had given rise to an inflated and bombastic style. And similarly in his treatment of Roman literature he adopts at times the historical point of view; as when, for instance, he accounts for the lack of polish in Accius and Pacuvius by a reference to the times in which they lived.⁴ In general, however, it must be admitted that Quintilian's judgments on literature play but a subordinate part in his work, and that in the main they lack freshness and insight. He nowhere attempts, for instance, the detailed analyses of Dionysius or those imaginative interpretations which light up the work of "Longinus"; and even when allowance is made for his immediate purpose, the suggestion is forced upon us that he had no great enthusiasm for literature as such. Thus he quotes with approval the conception of poetry according to which it was compared to "the oratory of display (*genus osten-*

¹ XII, 10, 20ff.² XII, 10, 14-5.³ XII, 10, 16ff.⁴ X, 1, 97.

tationi comparatum), aiming solely at giving pleasure...by representing what was not merely untrue but sometimes even incredible";¹ and with this conception in mind no profound appreciation was possible. At the same time what judgments he gives are by no means without their value. He presents us, for instance, with a pageant of ancient literature as a whole and in some sort of perspective; his comments throughout are of a sane and sensible kind, embracing much that was representative of the orthodox opinions of the time; while in his appreciations of style, which after all were his main business, he brings to our notice many stylistic refinements, and in so doing has extended in no slight degree the critical terminology.

It now remains to attempt some estimate of Quintilian's achievement as a whole and the place he occupies in the critical development. From what has already been said it is evident that it is as a theorist that he figures mainly in critical history; one whose efforts, along with those of others, were devoted to staying that decline in oratory and prose style which was so marked a feature in the literary activities of his day. In him, in short, may be said to culminate that critical movement of the second half of the first century, in which Tacitus, Demetrius, and "Longinus" had each played his part; and valuable and suggestive as their work had been, the contribution of Quintilian is no less interesting, though lacking in the supreme qualities of "Longinus's" teaching. Among the more valuable features of his treatment is his shrewd analysis of the causes of that decline, at least on the educational side; for, as we have seen, he neglects for the most part social and political factors. Or again, there is the positive and constructive character of his teaching, which, while free from dogmatism and pedantry, was eminently practical in kind, and aimed at a completeness of treatment found in none of his predecessors. Thus discarding the conventional types of style he considers style as a whole; and his treatment is made to embrace not only oratory and prose composition but also literature in general. Then, too, he has worked into his teaching much that was valuable in earlier authorities; he draws freely on such writers as Aristotle,

¹ x, 1, 28.

Theophrastus, Caecilius, Dionysius, Horace, and the author of *Ad Herennium*; though his main indebtedness is to Cicero, whom he quotes everywhere in his work. And yet his teaching has also an original and a personal quality; for into his treatise he has poured the rich experience of a lifetime, so that the work is full of a ripe wisdom expressed for the most part in forceful and persuasive fashion.

Most illuminating of all however is the main essence of his doctrine, which, while representing much that was familiar in literary theory, may be said to mark in some sense a modification of the critical position. Faced with the problem of the stylistic abuses of his day, together with the clash of views represented by the Atticists, the modernists, the antiquarians, and the orthodox Ciceronians, Quintilian endeavours to put forward a new orthodoxy of his own, which should present sound standards and ideals, and give guidance to his contemporaries in matters of style. With this object in view he works, as we have seen, from first principles; taking reason or nature as his guide, and discarding as his basis the authority of the Greeks—that principle which since Cicero's day had been accepted by theorists as axiomatic. In adopting this new attitude he may have been influenced by the fact that the first flush of enthusiasm for the Greeks was by this time over, while a national literature of undoubted merit had also been produced at Rome; though more probably it was due to a desire for a surer foundation, and to a consciousness of the unrelenting development of literature, so that no finality could be attached to the formal processes of the Greeks. But whatever the cause, it is on a basis of reason or nature that he rests his system; and the fact is of some importance. Thus his treatment of style throughout is of a rational and psychological kind; he emphasises the need for a proper choice of words and their most effective arrangement, the importance of Figures and other artistic devices, the part played by natural gifts, a knowledge of art, and exercise, as well as such matters as fitness (*decorum*), correctness, the imitation of sound models, and the like. All this, however, is familiar ground; it is substantially the doctrine put forward by Cicero and others as forming part of that creed

of classicism which embodied their main teaching. So that starting from different premises and working along rational lines, Quintilian has arrived at much the same position as his predecessors; he has in effect confirmed and restated the earlier doctrine of classicism. And in so doing he incidentally anticipated the position of those eighteenth-century critics to whom "Nature and Homer . . . were the same", and who found in the classicism of their day "Nature still, but Nature methodiz'd".¹

Yet while a restatement of classicism thus forms the main elements of Quintilian's creed, that restatement is not made without some amount of difference; and the difference lies, not only in his premises, but also in the substance of his theory, in the importance he attaches more particularly to the need for development in style. Since the days of Cicero marked changes had taken place in the matter of expression. New forces and influences had made themselves felt, resulting in daring innovations, often crude and uncontrolled, yet responding to something that lay deep in human nature, and capable at their best of undeniable appeal, as indeed Seneca had shown. Of these matters Tacitus had already treated, pointing out in tentative fashion the possibilities of the new movement. And Quintilian on rational grounds adopts much the same attitude, asserting yet more definitely the rights of innovation and the law of progress in the formation of style. Indeed he is even more explicit when he states that style should develop in accordance with contemporary taste and the genius of the language; and in embodying these principles in his literary creed he may be said to have made a significant advance on the Ciceronian position. Not that Cicero was unaware of the law of progress; on the contrary, in more than one place he traces development in the arts of sculpture, painting and oratory.² Yet he fails to apply the law to the stylistic problems of his time. He conceived of the existence of an absolute and unchanging type of eloquence, all departures from which were so many defects; whereas Quintilian has in mind no such static conception. Seeing in the modern innovations a real and living energy he regards them (with proper safeguards) as legitimate

¹ Pope, *Essay on Criticism*, ll. 87-8, 135 ff.

² Cf. Cicero, *Brutus*, LXX.

developments; and that he was justified in this course can scarcely be doubted. It has been usual to describe Quintilian as "the first of the Ciceronians"; but the description is one that must seriously be questioned, and not merely on the score of this vital discrepancy in doctrine. It is true that for Cicero he has the highest admiration; he draws on him freely for doctrine and illustration; while he also makes of Cicero's writings a sort of touchstone of taste. Yet in the main characteristics of his style he is no Ciceronian; and in one place he warns his readers against adopting any one writer exclusively as model.¹ In fact, like Horace, he declares himself to be "no superstitious follower of any one school";² and what he submits is therefore a modified form of Ciceronianism, a new orthodoxy of his own more in keeping with the spirit of the age.

In the light of these facts, then, the position of Quintilian in critical history cannot well be mistaken. As the last great exponent of classicism at Rome he puts forward a creed that differed in some important aspects from those of his predecessors, though animated by the same principles of order, design, and fitness, and making for the same goal of clearness and sanity in expression. To his contemporaries his teaching was admirably suited. It made for simplicity in an age of rhetoric run mad; it was calculated to restore the lost balance of prose; while it also took cognisance of new tendencies that could not be denied. To modern readers, on the other hand, with their simpler conceptions of style, there is much that seems complicated in his various prescriptions and his systematic analysis of details. His rational methods, it would seem, bring to light the formal qualities, the logic, of art, but miss for the most part the more important personal element, those imaginative and emotional factors essential to good writing. Moreover, to such devices as Figures he appears to attach too great an importance; as if from their mechanical use some magic resulted. So that altogether with him classicism seems to stand for a Roman interpretation of what was originally Greek, an interpretation from which had vanished something of the living spirit. Nevertheless in his teaching there is much that is of

¹ x, 2, 23.

² iii, 1, 22.

permanent value, and an abundance of good things clearly and effectively presented. That lucidity and sincerity are among the first essentials of good writing; that style consists in the order and movement we introduce into our thought; that greatness comes through limitation and restraint, whereas the bane of letters is *l'ingénieux sans bon sens*; these are among his guiding principles, to which might perhaps be added his belief in progress and in the spirit of the age, and these things are as true to-day as when they were first uttered. Nor was posterity slow to recognise his merits, though at first he was known merely as the author of *Declamations* and an educationist of standing, while a mutilated text of the *Institutio Oratoria* was all that was available to medieval men of letters. With the discovery of a complete copy by Poggio at St Gall in 1416, however, his influence spread wide throughout Western Europe; and the renewed interest in rhetoric at the Renaissance brought further recognition of the value of his work. In England his influence may be detected in Elyot's *Governour* and more especially in Jonson's *Discoveries*, though Dryden, Pope, and later rhetoricians like Blair, seem also to have been familiar with the work. More recently his great treatise has perhaps been unduly neglected; partly owing no doubt to the prejudice attached to rhetoric and all its works. Yet in the sphere of literary criticism Quintilian still has something to say; and not a few of his reminders with regard to style embody truths that need restating in modern times.

CHAPTER VIII

CRITICAL CROSS-CURRENTS: MARTIAL, THE YOUNGER PLINY, PLUTARCH, DIO CHRYSOSTOM, AND LUCIAN¹

IN the works that have been so far considered lay without a doubt the main substance of the criticism of the latter half of the first century A.D. In their far-reaching significance, the directness and suggestiveness of their teaching, they stand out unmistakably in the critical revival; and at the same time they reveal in no uncertain light the nature of the contemporary problems, as well as the variety of efforts made to grapple with the conditions which then prevailed. Nevertheless, the picture would not be complete without some consideration of those further pronouncements on literary questions which came from other quarters; pronouncements less direct and complete perhaps, but still characteristic of the critical activities of the time, and therefore not without their value. Concerned with contemporary conditions, for the most part, were Martial and the younger Pliny, the latter of whom was a member of that famous literary coterie which included Tacitus and Suetonius, and in which were discussed questions of interest at the time. In the *Epigrams* of Martial, for instance, will be found numerous

¹ *Texts and Translations.* MARTIAL: *Epigrams*, text and trans. by W. C. Ker, 2 vols. (Loeb Cl. Lib.), 1919-20. THE YOUNGER PLINY: *Epistularum libri novem*, ed. Kükula (Teubner), Leipzig, 1929; *Letters*, text with Melmoth's trans., rev. by W. M. L. Hutchinson, 2 vols. (Loeb Cl. Lib.), 1915; trans. by J. B. Firth, 2 vols. (Scott Lib.), London. PLUTARCH: *Opera*, ed. Bernardakis, and others, 7 vols. (Teubner), Leipzig, 1872-93; *Moralia*, trans. by several hands, rev. by W. W. Goodwin, 5 vols. Boston, 1870; trans. by Philemon Holland (Everyman's Lib.), London; text with trans. by F. C. Babbitt, 3 vols. (Loeb Cl. Lib.), London and New York; *How a Young Man should study Poetry*, trans. by F. M. Padelford (Yale Stud. in English), New York, 1902; *Selected Essays*, I, trans. by T. G. Tucker, Oxford, 1913; *Selected Essays*, II, trans. by A. O. Prickard, Oxford, 1918; *Extracts*, in J. D. Denniston, *Greek Lit. Crit.* pp. 208-11. DIO CHRYSOSTOM: *Dio Chrysostomus*, ed. Budé (Teubner), Leipzig, 1915-19; trans. by Budé, Corbeil, 1927; *Extract*, in J. D. Denniston, *Greek Lit. Crit.* pp. 212-17. LUCIAN: *Works*, ed. by C. Jacobitz, 3 vols. (Teubner), Leipzig, 1903; *Extracts*, in Saintsbury, *Loci Critici*, pp. 39-40; and in J. D. Denniston, *Greek Lit. Crit.* pp. 218-21.

comments relating to his craft and to poetry generally; while in the *Letters* of the younger Pliny we have the views of a cultured man of letters on matters rhetorical and literary, affording a faithful reflexion of literary opinion and taste during the closing years of the first century and the opening years of the next. Then, too, interests of another kind were represented by Plutarch and Dio Chrysostom. They were two of the finer Greek spirits who had associations with Rome at the time and who sought to remind their contemporaries of something of the Greek teaching on life and literature. Representative of the Greek revival¹ which began with the close of the century, they renewed the claims of philosophy in opposition to the new sophistic movement, at the same time dealing incidentally with some of the wider aspects of art. And in criticism their work is not without its interest; together with that of their Roman contemporaries it illustrates the cross-currents of doctrine which prevailed at the end of the first century A.D.

Of the first importance is the attack made by Martial (40-102 A.D.) on the traditional subject-matter of poetry, the outworn themes of artificial epics and tragedies current in his day. The challenge was no new one. It had been tentatively made by Manilius, Persius, and the poet of *Etna*; and even Statius had contrasted favourably the national theme of Lucan's *Pharsalia* with the hackneyed stories of Troy, Ulysses, and the rest. Now, however, Martial makes his protest in yet more determined fashion, condemning outright the trite tales of Oedipus and Thyestes, the monstrous themes of witches and Scyllas, and the futile stories of Niobe, Andromache, Endymion, Daedalus, and the like.² Nor was it that such subjects were to him merely tedious; they had also been worn threadbare so that no novelty was possible in their treatment, and moreover, they cramped his style with their endless reminiscences. And in their place he therefore advocates a treatment of nature and truth—a plea for realism, and for that proper study of mankind which he held to be "man". Nor was he alone in this pronouncement of his. Equally trenchant were the remarks of

¹ See Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, *Glaube der Hellenen*, II, pp. 428 ff.

² *Epig.* 4, 49; 5, 53; 9, 50; 10, 4.

Juvenal (c. 60–140 A.D.) on the barren mythological subjects; those tedious epics and tragedies concerning Theseus, Telephus, and Orestes, with their inevitable descriptions of storms, descents into Hades, and all the old lumber of a bygone age.¹ Like Martial, too, he recommends the adoption of more rational subjects. The affairs of men (*Quidquid agunt homines*), their hopes and fears, their passions and their joys,² these he submits were the true themes of poets; and in this joint appeal for a more natural art lay one of the most significant utterances in contemporary criticism.

But while this attack represents perhaps the most striking part of Martial's criticism, scattered throughout his pages are numerous other comments which reveal him as a conscious artist with a clear conception of the epigram as a literary *genre*, and with views as well on not a few of the current theories and practices. Thus epigrams, he maintains, were no mere quips or cranks.³ Such a description, he adds, would apply rather to the sham heroics of epic and tragedy with their turgid and frenzied utterance; whereas the epigram was firmly rooted in life. Then, too, it dealt with life in satirical fashion, though its jests were harmless;⁴ and he himself claimed "to have spared the individual while denouncing the vice".⁵ Moreover, the essence of the epigram he held to be pungency and therefore brevity;⁶ and indeed he is never tired of girding against the long-winded poems of his day. The single book of Persius, he states, is worth more than the whole *Amazonid* of Marsus.⁷ His own epigrams are said to give life where your grand epic creates but "a giant of clay";⁸ for the virtue of the epigram is that it contains nothing otiose or redundant.⁹ And, once again, he defends his audacities of sentiment and style, which he claims to be intimately bound up with this particular way of writing. *Iocosa carmina*, he states,¹⁰ are ineffective without prurience; and here he bases his doctrine on the dictum of Catullus,¹¹ to whom he refers more than once as his master in

¹ *Sat.* I, 1–12.

⁴ VII, 12.

⁷ IV, 29.

¹⁰ I, 35.

² *Ibid.* 85–6.

⁵ X, 33.

⁸ IX, 50.

¹¹ Catullus, XVI, 5; see also Pliny, *Letters*, IV, 14.

³ *Epig.* IV, 49.

⁶ VII, 25.

⁹ II, 77.

this *genre*. Of his remarks on poetry in general, most are concerned with matters of contemporary taste, and therefore deal with questions under debate at the time. Thus he refers more than once to the antiquarian craze,¹ to the cult of Ennius and others, which, prevalent throughout the century, was now entering on a new phase. He points out that such misguided admiration was no new thing, that contemporary poets had always been viewed askance, and that dead poets alone had ever been praised. Homer, Menander, and Virgil, he notes, had in their time all been subject to detraction. And he condemns in no uncertain fashion the perverted taste which approved of crude ill-formed verses, and the uncouth jargon of Ennius, Accius, and Pacuvius, of which he quotes *terrai frugiferai* (frugiferous terrene) as an example. Elsewhere it is the metrical freaks of some of his contemporaries that attract his attention; as when he alludes with scorn to such tricks as the use of verses that read backward as well as forward, or of *versus echoici*, where a concluding word echoes a preceding one.² Such misplaced ingenuities he severely condemns; they are follies which degrade those who attempt them. And he is therefore content to leave such trifles to the eccentrics of his day, of whom Palaemon the grammarian is mentioned as one. Then, too, he has his views on standards of judgment, as is shown when he states, somewhat ambiguously it is true, that "a level (*aequalis*) book is a bad one".³ Here at first sight he seems to be commenting on the much-vexed question of "correctness", that demand for flawlessness in composition which crippled expression and led to the production of unnatural and feeble art.⁴ What he seems to say is that excessive retrenchment defeats its own object, that the faultily faultless is not the highest test of literature, and that a comparative degree of perfection is all that is humanly possible. At the same time it must be confessed that his statement is open to another interpretation, namely, that in all works of literature there must be passages of varying degrees of inspiration. No poet, it is implied, can remain always on the heights; in his work

¹ v, 10; viii, 69; xi, 90.

³ vii, 90; cf. i, 16; vii, 81.

² ii, 86; see note by W. C. Ker, *loc. cit.*

⁴ See p. 237 *supra*.

there must be soarings aloft and pedestrian passages, light as well as shade. And such suggestions may be paralleled in the writings of his contemporaries. Altogether, then, it is clear that in Martial we have a critic of some pith and moment, one whose remarks on literature, always keen and sensible, may be said to lose nothing from the manner of their utterance. His influence in general made for sanity and truth in art; while he strikes more than one shrewd blow against the false classicism of his day. As a judicial critic he has no great claims; his uncritical praise of Silius Italicus¹ is sufficient proof of this. On the other hand his best work was done in advocating new ways and effects in literature; and not without its significance is his plea for chanting the praises of Bilbilis instead of Thebes.² It was a claim that was doubtless due to his Spanish upbringing; and to that same source was probably due the freshness and daring of his literary outlook.

Interest of another kind is attached to the critical work of the younger Pliny (62-113 A.D.) who, less direct and positive in his doctrine than Martial, reflects in a more comprehensive fashion the literary tastes and opinions of his day. His *Letters*, which contain his criticism, were probably written between the years 96 and 113 A.D.; and their many-sided interest, their historical value, is very considerable. A pupil of Quintilian, Pliny had formed friendships with most of the contemporary men of letters, was himself the leading spirit in an important literary coterie; while as a man of affairs he not only moved freely in Roman society but was ultimately brought into intimate relations with the Emperor himself. So that altogether his acquaintance with Roman conditions—social, political, and intellectual—was of a varied and extensive kind; and its results are seen in his detailed accounts of men and things, and in the ever-changing picture of Roman life supplied in his *Letters*. Among the most famous of his epistles are those which tell the story of the eruption of Vesuvius in A.D. 79 when Pompeii and Herculaneum were overwhelmed and his uncle the elder Pliny lost his life.³ Another is that which contains the reference to early Christianity;⁴ Pliny's report to Trajan on the way of life

¹ vii, 63.² iv, 55.³ *Letters*, vi, 16 and 20.⁴ x, 96.

of that strange sect, and his fear lest the contagion of their "superstition" should spread throughout the province of Pontus and Bithynia, of which at the time he was governor. But while these are the most vivid, and perhaps the most familiar, of the letters, in the rest there is no lack of interest, whether the writer is describing town life or country life, law suits, public recitations, personal friends, or his own villa near Laurentum; and his concern with literary matters is everywhere apparent. As a letter-writer Pliny is lacking in some of the highest qualities. His letters, intended for circulation among friends, have an air of artificiality; they are wanting in spontaneity and charm, and in that easy familiarity, the "divine chit-chat", of the best writers. Yet from amidst his pages his character plainly emerges, which is that of a vain, cultured, and successful man; and they add not a little to our knowledge of his times, and of the literary views and opinions held by a dilettante of the age.

Of Pliny's contribution to criticism not the least significant part are his theorisings on style, a subject to which he frequently reverts, advising or musing as the occasion demanded. For the most part the doctrine he puts forward is distinctly orthodox. Thus he recommends, for instance, the imitation of all the best models with a view to surpassing them; though his practice in this matter is a little obscure, for he declares that the models he follows are Demosthenes and Cicero—and Calvus as well.¹ Elsewhere he is on safer ground in emphasising the need for the careful ordering of thought, a skilful manipulation of Figures and transitions, and an avoidance of irrelevance; since attention to diction, he held, was not enough.² As he himself states, he looked forward to the day when the hunt for the phrase and the word would give way to a chaste simplicity.³ Then, too, he has some practical advice to give on the cultivation of style, for which he recommends the practice of translation from Greek into Latin or Latin into Greek, as well as attempts at writing short poems.⁴ The former, he suggests, would develop expression and clarify the thought, while the latter would tend to sharpen the wits and give facility in writing. It is, however, in his attitude to the Atticist tradition that he

¹ I, 2, 2 and 4; VII, 9, 2. ² III, 13, 3. ³ III, 18, 10. ⁴ VII, 9, 2 and 9.

becomes most explicit as a theorist; and with the claims and principles of that school he deals on more than one occasion. In one place he states at some length a case against their demand for brevity in style. It is a quality, he affirms,¹ that can easily be overdone; for there are occasions that call for strong and weighty utterance, and then a copious, not a concise, manner is needed,—just as iron, he adds, makes an impression upon solid bodies by means of prolonged rather than rapid blows. Then, too, he is not impressed by appeals to history. For if Lysias, Cato, and the Gracchi are quoted in support of the doctrine, the authority of Demosthenes, Aeschines, and Cicero is available on the other side; and in addition, the references of Eupolis and Aristophanes² to the oratory of Pericles make it abundantly clear that his expression was on the grand scale and not conspicuous for its brevity. Nor again, does he attach much weight to further Atticist arguments, such as the value of the “mean” and the element of excess bound up with the grand style. To such arguments he would reply that those who fail to rise to the occasion fail as badly as do those who over-elaborate; the former through weakness, the latter through strength. And that, moreover, of Homer’s characters the true orator is not Thersites with his torrent of words, nor yet Menelaus with his brevity of utterance, but Ulysses whose words fell from him like snowflakes in winter, abundant, unremitting, and diffusive in their effect.³ Nor is it merely the Atticist principle of brevity that Pliny attacks. He is equally insistent in his positive demands for colour and vigour to be infused into style even at the risk of some amount of incorrectness. And here he is decrying, like so many of his predecessors, the undue use of the *lima*, which, designed originally in the interests of purity and good taste, often led to aridity and platitude in writing. Hence his contention that eloquence should be given a free rein, and that genius should not be confined within limits too narrow. The great orator (or writer), he states, should soar, carried away by his feelings; he should venture among precipices to attain the great heights,

¹ I, 20, 2-3.

² I, 20, 17 and 19; see also vol. I, 32.

³ I, 20, 22.

and undergo risks as tight-rope walkers do, even at the risk of falling. Safety, it is true, would be found in the plains, but there the going is dull and uninteresting; and those who creep get no credit for not falling.¹ Thus, with a variety of images taken from his predecessors,² does Pliny emphasise the need for boldness in composition, while attacking Atticist prudence as mere pusillanimity. All beauty and grandeur, he implies, are the results of taking risks.

But while style is perhaps the main preoccupation of Pliny, he also devotes not a little space to criticism of a judicial kind; and on literary standards in the first place he has something of interest to say. That he was no upholder of the doctrine of "correctness" has already been shown; and this is corroborated by a statement of his (neatly turned, as he complacently points out), regarding a correct but uninspired speaker, of whom he remarked that "his only fault was that he had none".³ In addition he is clearly aware that it is useless to expect the same high level of inspiration to be maintained throughout a given piece of art. As shade in a picture, he explains, brings out the high lights, so in writing it is often necessary to reduce the treatment to an ordinary level with the same object in view.⁴ Then, too, he has more than one illuminating remark to make on the formation of literary judgment. Thus, every poem, he states, must be judged in its own class and on its own merits; there should be no comparison of different "kinds", to the disadvantage of one or the other.⁵ Or again, he maintains, as many did after him, that it is only an artist who can adequately judge another artist.⁶ And since in both nature and art, he adds, volume gives dignity and beauty, hence length of flight as well as height is a criterion of artistic value. In short, "the more there is of a good book the better it is".⁷

In spite of such views as these, however, Pliny has not much to show in the way of actual judgments, beyond cursorily expressed opinions on this or that orator or writer. On one at

¹ ix, 26, 2 ff.

³ ix, 26, 1.

⁵ iv, 14, 7.

² E.g. the elder Seneca, "Longinus", Quintilian, etc.

⁴ iii, 13, 4; cf. Martial, p. 302 *supra*.

⁶ i, 10, 4.

⁷ i, 20, 4.

least of the current questions he takes up a sensible position. "I am one", he writes,¹ "who admires the ancients, but I am far from despising as many do the genius of the moderns"; and in general his main efforts are devoted to an appreciation of contemporary writers, and more particularly those who belonged to his immediate circle of friends. Not that he is eminently successful in this sort of work; though he has the wit to see that Tacitus's *Histories* were sure of immortality,² and that Martial, if not for all time, was yet a man of genius, keen and caustic, whose work was characterised by a biting wit and candour.³ Nor must it be forgotten that he assessed more accurately than Martial had done the value of Silius Italicus as a poet. The work in which Martial had detected undying quality (*numquam moritura volumina*)⁴—during the lifetime of the poet—is briefly dismissed by Pliny as of an inferior kind, and notable for its industry rather than for its genius.⁵ Apart from this, his judgments are largely concerned with contemporary orators, of whom Isaeus, Euphrates, and Artemidorus were striking examples. And of the Assyrian Isaeus, in particular, one of the originators of the new Greek sophistic, he supplies an enthusiastic account, in which he dilates on the sophist's rhetorical excellences, his readiness and fluency, his Attic quality, his neat introductions, his lucid expositions, his forceful conclusions, and the skilful use he makes of rhetorical ornament; all of which are said to produce an impressive effect, teaching, delighting, and stirring his audiences.⁶ For the rest, in Pliny's appreciations there will be found a large element of uncritical praise; as when, for instance, he credits Vergilius Romanus with comedies worthy of being classed with those of Plautus and Terence.⁷ Elsewhere again he speaks of Saturnius as a rival of the earlier poets, his verses being such as Catullus might have written;⁸ while of Voconius Romanus he states that his letters were so good as to make one think that the Muses spoke in Latin.⁹ From such comments as these it is abundantly clear that there is absent the restraint needed for the formation of

¹ VI, 21, 1.⁴ See p. 303 *supra*.⁷ VI, 21, 4.² VII, 33, 1.⁵ III, 7, 5.⁸ I, 16, 5.³ III, 21, 1.⁶ II, 3.⁹ II, 13, 7.

sound critical judgment. And indeed Pliny's appreciations throughout share in the characteristic defects of contemporary criticism in all ages; in the lack of a proper perspective, as well as in errors due to personal bias and prejudice. So far from being an inspired arbiter of taste he is not infrequently swayed by personal considerations; and in spite of literary interests of a wide and generous kind he is wanting in discrimination of the finer artistic qualities. In one respect indeed he may be said to have shown some amount of originality in aesthetic matters. For he appreciates as did few of his contemporaries the artistic inspiration to be derived from contact with Nature; the incentive to thought found in the solitude and silence of the woods, the uplifting influence of the sea and the mountains.¹ And this is not without its interest for modern readers. At the same time in actual literary criticism he cannot be said to rank very high. His theorising, it is true, is devoid of neither sense nor sensibility; though on the other hand it consists mainly of orthodox teaching, and of those neatly turned platitudes in which he delighted. And as for his judgments, they are for the most part superficial and conventional in kind; they do little more than reflect the current opinions of the time—perhaps all that could be expected of epistolary writings. Such results, it is obvious, are not the marks of the highest critic; yet they have their value in critical history.

Such then were the contributions made to the critical activities of the time by Martial and the younger Pliny. Supplementary to the work of Quintilian, Tacitus, and others, their efforts illustrate the amount of critical discussion that went on among contemporary Romans; they also throw fresh light from different angles on the views and tendencies current in the literary circles of the time. Still more important, however, is the critical work of Plutarch (A.D. 48–120), which constitutes yet another of those cross-currents of doctrine that give to this period its many-sided interest. Resident for some time at Rome under Vespasian and Domitian (A.D. 69–86), Plutarch there lectured in Greek to enthusiastic audiences, made the acquaintance of many distinguished Romans, and

¹ 1, 6, 2; 1, 9, 6–7; cf. "Longinus", c. 35.

subsequently retired to his home in Greece, "the little town" of Chaeronea, where in his latter years most of his works were probably written. Of these voluminous works, however, but few were devoted to critical matters. Thus, apart from the tractate *On Education*, of doubtful authenticity, his most famous work, the *Lives*, has practically no bearing on the subject; while of the commentaries he wrote on Homer and Hesiod, Aratus and Nicander, fragments only have come down. For the bulk of his criticism we must look to that miscellaneous collection of essays, dialogues, and letters known as the *Moralia* or *Moral Essays*; and there we shall find a few serious attempts at discussing literary matters, together with incidental remarks on the literary art scattered throughout its pages. Of the works more definitely critical the most important is undoubtedly the essay *How to study Poetry* (*de audiendis poetis*), which contains his considered views on poetry as well as many details which are repeated elsewhere in his writings. The essay *On Listening* (*de audiendo*), again, has definite interest as a discussion on the art of listening (or reading); and so has also the *Comparison between Aristophanes and Menander*, though it has survived merely in epitome form. Less valuable is the essay *On the Malignity of Herodotus* which is notable for its historical, rather than its literary, interest; while the *Lives of the Ten Orators* is devoid of value for our present purpose, consisting solely of details of a biographical kind. For the rest, critical comments are to be found in many of the remaining works, as for instance, in the *Symposiacs* or *Table Talk*, a collection of dialogues dealing with philosophical and religious topics; or again, in the dialogue *Why the Pythia does not now give Oracles in Verse* (*de Pythiae oraculis*) and the essay *On the Glory of the Athenians* (*de gloria Atheniensium*). These are the main items of Plutarch's contribution to criticism; and it remains to formulate from them some idea of his achievement as a critic.

From what has already been said it is evident that the one substantial work that calls for consideration is the essay on the reading of poetry, *How to study Poetry*. The subject-matter of the rest will be referred to as occasion arises; but their formal interest is slight, embodying as they do merely scattered and

casual remarks. Of the pseudo-Plutarchian tractate *On Education* (*de liberis educandis*), perhaps, something might here conveniently be said; more especially as it was not without its influence at the Renaissance, a portion of the work being adapted by Lyly in his *Euphues: The Anatomy of Wit*.¹ Thus among many pedagogic injunctions are to be found certain precepts relating to the cultivation of style; the need for careful arrangement of thought to avoid prolixity and confusion, the evils of the bombastic and the trite in literary expression, the necessity for boldness as well as correctness in the choice of words, and the virtue of variety in the matter of clauses.² All these are palpably well-worn commonplaces; and the conventional nature of the treatment might further be illustrated by the guiding principle laid down that for all right action, in art as well as in morals, nature, reason, and habit (*φύσις, λόγος, ἔθος*) must all contribute.³ It is in the essay *How to study Poetry*, however, that we have what is perhaps the characteristic pronouncement of Plutarch. In form the work is of the conventional kind; it is addressed to Marcus Sedatus for the instruction of his son Cleandrus. And the question raised is how in view of the immoral matter often treated by poets, young men are to read them without moral injury. By way of explanation Plutarch points out that poetry, being largely fictitious by nature, contains of necessity elements that have no relation to the truth; and that moreover, as an imitative art, it reproduces in its treatment of life, actions and characters both moral and immoral, as well as sayings that oftentimes harbour ignoble sentiments. And here, it is clear, the problem is the old one reminiscent of Plato, namely, the proper attitude to be adopted to existing poetry, which so far from being an imitation of the ideal world is in the main a copy of actual life with all its imperfections. The solution suggested by Plutarch is on lines of his own. In the first place he argues that since poetry by its very nature is fictitious and imitative, much that is reprehensible in its stories may therefore be freely discounted. Then, too, he claims that unhealthy sentiments occasioned by

¹ Cf. the section "Euphues and his Ephoebus": see *John Lyly, Works*, ed. R. W. Bond, vol. I, 260-86.

² *On Educ.* 6-7.

³ *Ibid.* 2, A.

evil characters or actions are often corrected by the poets themselves in the course of their work; and that where such comments are wanting, they are sometimes supplied by other poets. Moreover, he insists that the best interpretations should always be placed on offending passages, and that where such interpretations are not possible, the passages should straightway be frankly emended. As precedents for this he quotes the practice of Cleanthes and Antisthenes; and while he suggests that the healthy instincts of properly trained boys would as a rule protect them from evil effects, in the last resort, he maintains, all sentiments in poetry should be checked and confirmed by reference to philosophy, which he regards as the final arbiter of poetic thought. From this brief summary of Plutarch's essay it is evident that the positive value of his thesis is but slight, his argument being pedantic, trivial, and even naïve in places. With him ethical preoccupations are uppermost; he approaches poetry, not from the aesthetic standpoint, but rather with a view to obtaining rules of conduct which should go to the formation of sound moral character. And the sum of his advice is that poetry should invariably be read with keen discrimination from the moral point of view. That it had charms of its own along with much profitable matter he had no doubt, as he explains in characteristic fashion with a variety of images. Its charms, for instance, were those of Siren-voices, which however called for cautious approach, and not for flight "under Epicurean sail".¹ Or again, it was "the Muses' vine"² with ripe fruit under the leaves; and what it needed was pruning, not uprooting, a mingling of its wine with the pure waters of philosophy. Such then is Plutarch's treatment of the question he raises; and the limitations of that treatment are obvious. At the same time the work has interests of other kinds; and of its value historically there can be no question, since the views it embodies were those which prevailed in the decadent Greece of Plutarch's own day. Nor is this all; for incidentally it contains reflexions and comments on art in general, as well as an abundance of quotations, some of which are unique. And these things, inseparable from Plutarch's essay treatment, are

¹ *How to study Poetry*, 15, D.

² *Ibid.* 15, E.

elements which give lasting value, not only to this particular essay, but also to the rest of his writings that bear on literature and the literary art.

Of all the varied elements however that go to make up Plutarch's critical work, none is of greater interest to modern readers than that theory of poetry which underlies his various utterances. To begin with he makes it plain (and here he follows Aristotle) that in his opinion it is the subject-matter, and not the mere use of metrical form, that constitutes the essence of poetry. The verses of Empedocles, Parmenides, Nicander, and Theognis, he points out, are not really poetry. Such writers, he states, had only borrowed metrical form in order to add dignity to their treatment; just as men take carriages to avoid the indignity of walking.¹ Since they aimed at instruction the normal medium for them would have been a simple and direct prose; whereas poetry, which was the product of both intellect and feeling, required for its expression the added sensuousness of verse. Thus while insisting primarily on the intellectual element in poetry, he insists also on its emotional quality as constituting in the second place one of its necessary components. And with this as his basis he develops accordingly his doctrine concerning the nature and function of poetry.

In general, the nature of poetry, he holds, is determined by three main considerations, namely, its imitative character, its fictional quality, and its artistic element; and on each of these matters he has something to say. To begin with, he maintains that the subject-matter of poetry was in part determined by its nature as an art of imitation, analogous to that of painting. And in support of this he quotes the well-known saying (elsewhere attributed to Simonides)² that "poetry is vocal painting, painting is silent poetry" (*ζωγραφίαν μὲν εἶναι φθεγγομένην τὴν ποίησιν, ποίησιν δὲ σιγῶσαν τὴν ζωγραφίαν*).³ Not that the analogy is, however, complete. For whereas the themes of poetry are everywhere tacitly assumed to be all forms of human life, poetic imitation is nowhere defined as including the portrayal of animals or still life, as was the case with painting. Its subjects

¹ *How to study Poetry*, 16, c; cf. also *Why the Pythia*, 405, E.

² *The Glory of the Athenians*, 346, F. ³ *How to study Poetry*, 17, F. See vol. I, 17.

are by implication confined to the actions, the emotions, and the characters of men; and here again Plutarch is at one with Aristotle. On the other hand poetry is said to resemble painting in that it may deal with the uglier as well as the nobler aspects of human life.¹ Thus a painter may depict a lizard, an ape, or the face of Thersites; and similarly, the poet may deal with base actions and depraved human characters. But this feature, Plutarch shows elsewhere, was to some extent inherent in the imitative process itself, which was said to aim at attaining the likeness of truth, the charm of "probability" (τὸ πιθανόν);² and since, in life, vices and virtues were inextricably mingled, the poet in his choice of material was therefore subject to the same law. And in yet one other respect does Plutarch comment on this imitative process, when he states that the poet in selecting his matter should make use of variety and complications.³ This was for the purpose of emotional effect, in order to give surprise and delight. And therefore, the characters of poetry, he points out, are not uniformly successful or happy; even the gods themselves are depicted as subject to human error, lest, owing to the absence of peril and conflict, excitement should be wanting.

But while poetry was thus an imitation of human life devised with some amount of probability, into its constitution also entered another element, that of fiction (τὸ πλαττόμενον), the invention of fanciful incidents and characters which had no foundation in fact. And to this element Plutarch attached considerable weight. Its main purpose was said to be emotional in kind, that of adding to the delight of poetry; and Plutarch is at some pains to emphasise this point. Thus in one place he claims that no beauty of verse or diction or structure could rival the appeal of a well-woven fabric of fiction.⁴ Just as in painting, he adds, colour is more effective than line, being more life-like and illusive, so in poetry a fiction (ψεῦδος) plausibly presented is more impressive and pleasing than a story non-fabulous (ἄμυθος) or real (ἄπλαστος), though adorned with all the graces of metre and diction. Then, too, he explains that this use of fiction gives to the poet greater freedom in handling the

¹ *How to study Poetry*, 17, F. ² *Ibid.* 25, B. ³ *Ibid.* 25, D. ⁴ *Ibid.* 16, B.

facts of life. Those facts, he states,¹ are often severe and unpleasing; but the poet by his art of feigning can transform and beautify, and turn aside from distressful things to others more pleasing. Nor is the device without its justification; more especially as poetry was designed for sensitive souls alone, and not for those devoid of understanding. To such sensitive minds, Plutarch maintains, illusion was acceptable; and he quotes Gorgias's description of tragedy as an "illusion", wherein the ancient sophist had commended the artistic deceit.² "We have known of festivals", adds Plutarch, "without pipes and dances; but never of a poem without its fabulous (*μῦθον*) or fictitious (*ψευδῆ*) element."³

Concerning the third element of poetry—its artistic qualities—Plutarch has rather less to say, though he is by no means blind to aesthetic matters. Incidentally he refers to the beauty and arrangement of words, to the charms of verse, of well-timed metaphors and tropes;⁴ and all alike he regards as emotional devices, which, like fiction, rendered more pleasing the subject-matter of poetry. Yet too much importance was not to be attached to these matters; and indeed, the various charms of poetry he describes in one place as "mere play" (*παιδιὰ*), a phrase reminiscent of Plato.⁵ Elsewhere he maintains that a pleasing Attic style was not the first consideration in literature; your medicinal drug, as he puts it, needed not the best Attic earthenware for its service, nor were winter cloaks necessarily made of Attic wool.⁶ In reading generally, the methods of the bee and not the garland-maker were to be followed;⁷ and in literature, and poetry more especially, it was the thought, the subject-matter, and not the expression, that counted.

Such then in its main features was Plutarch's conception of the nature of poetry; and in keeping with that theory were the ideas he puts forward concerning the poetic function. To begin with, he makes it clear that the giving of mere pleasure was

¹ *How to study Poetry*, 16, B.

² *Ibid.* 15, D; *The Glory of Ath.* 348, C; see also vol. I, 18.

³ *How to study Poetry*, 16, C.

⁴ *Ibid.* 16, B.

⁵ *The Glory of Ath.* 350, B; see also vol. I, 51.

⁶ *On Listening*, 42, D; also *Man's Progress in Virtue*, 79, C-80, A.

⁷ *On Listening*, 41, F.

not enough. That and none other was said to be the aim of the sophists (*σοφιστιῶντων*), with "their dainty flowery words, their showy theatrical manner";¹ whereas to Plutarch such a doctrine was nothing less than a perversion of art. According to Solon, he points out,² the prime concern of all artists was with ends, not means. The weaver aimed at making a cloak, not at manipulating his shuttles; the Muses had as their end in view the soothing of the emotions, not mere flute-playing. And elsewhere³ he implies that the true function of all literature lay in supplying uplifting effects, in the chastening of passion, the lightening of grief, the inculcating of courage and the love of virtue; in a word, in the correcting of life by means of reason. And this holds true in connexion with poetry, though Plutarch nowhere pronounces definitely on the point. Everywhere he takes it for granted that the true aim of the poet is to present ideas that go to the strengthening of character, to lead his readers to emulate what is morally good, and in general to bring philosophy to bear on the conduct of life. As for the pleasure of poetry, that was designed merely to make the process easier; it was the means rather than the end. And for Plutarch, poetry is therefore the preparatory school for philosophy; it is a kind of twilight, through which young readers pass, to enable them in the end to face without pain or flinching the blazing and bewildering light of the mistress-study, Philosophy.⁴

While however Plutarch's theory of poetry must be said to command the main attention, significant also are other occasional pronouncements of his which bear on the psychology of art, and which witness to his appreciation of some of the finer aesthetic problems. Of these his concern with the ugly and the painful in art is perhaps the most striking; for here he raises a question which is still being debated,⁵ namely, why we are pleased with the mimic representation of things, the actual sight of which would definitely repel us. He mentions, without approval, the Epicurean theory,⁶ according to which the artistic pleasure arising out of painful subjects was said to be due to

¹ *On Listening*, 42, A.

² *Dinner Party of Seven Sages*, 156, B.

³ *On Listening*, 42, B.

⁴ *How to study Poetry*, 14, E, 36, E.

⁵ See W. M. Dixon, *Tragedy*, chs. I-VI.

⁶ *Symposiasts*, 673, C.

mere sensation, coupled with the knowledge that the suffering was unreal. To Plutarch, however, the pleasure was rather of an intellectual kind and was due to an appreciation of the artist's imitative skill;¹ for there is, he maintains, a legitimate pleasure resulting from the skill which imitates naturally and successfully. Thus, he points out, the imitation of a grunting hog given by the ventriloquist Parmeno was wont to delight his audiences; while pleasing effects were also produced by Aristophon's painting of Philoctetes and Silanion's statue of Jocasta, both realistic likenesses of wasting and dying persons. In each case, he asserts, it was the excellence of the imitation, its fitness and naturalness, that produced the pleasing effect; and the explanation is noteworthy, if not conclusive. Modern theorists, for instance, would explain Parmeno's success as being due to exaggeration for humorous effect; while in the treatment of painful subjects the artist is said to represent suffering better than the sufferer himself.² Apart from this, however, Plutarch has further comments to make on other aspects of art which bear more or less on critical theory. And notable, in the first place, as representative of classical doctrine, is his conception of artistic beauty, which he describes as resulting from a number of factors in happy combination, with due proportion and harmony; ugliness on the other hand being the outcome of the faulty omission or addition of some one or more elements.³ Then, too, he has something to say on the doctrine of "inspiration", which he rejects in its crudest form, even in connexion with the Pythia.⁴ In general he describes it as a mysterious force which impels the poet to utterance in accordance with his nature, supplies suitable fancies, and pours light into the soul. Yet the poet, he implies, is no passive instrument; he is neither "possessed", nor yet ignorant of his message; but a conscious agent awakened to activity in the field of art. Of yet greater interest, however, are Plutarch's remarks on "inspiration" in a more particular sense—the inspiration generated by the love-passion in poets. He quotes Euripides's line: "Love

¹ *Symposiacs*, 673, c; *How to study Poetry*, 18, A-C.

² See Bosanquet, *History of Aesthetic*, pp. 106 ff.

³ *On Listening*, 45, c.

⁴ *Why the Pythia*, 397, c.

maketh poets of those who are strangers to the Muse";¹ and in his comment on the passage he attempts an explanation of the phenomenon in accordance with current theories. Thus he asserts that love arouses in her devotees a faculty of utterance which had previously lain dormant; and that the workings of this influence resembled those which led to expression in music. According to Theophrastus, whose work *On Music* he quotes,² there were three moods which inspired musical utterance, namely, grief, joy, and ecstasy. And since love above all passions was subject to excesses of those moods, it was therefore, he argued, a prime begetter of poems and songs—a truth which was to be illustrated in later ages. And lastly, there are his remarks on the art of reading, where, once again following Theophrastus, he points out the need for imaginative co-operation between speaker (or writer) and listener (or reader). "Your well-bred table-companion", he states,³ "has a part to play; and much more your cultured listener (or reader).... He is in short a partner, a collaborator (*συνεργός*) of the speaker (or writer). For just as in ball-play the one catching must move in accordance with the thrower, so in all discourse (or reading) there must be a harmonious interchange (*εὐρυθμία*) between speaker (or writer) and listener (or reader)", if the best results are to be attained. Nor must we omit his reference to the true aim of listening (or reading), which he states⁴ is not that of getting enjoyment or acquiring knowledge, but rather of enabling a man to think for himself. The mind, as he puts it, is not a vessel that needs filling; but rather a pile to be kindled into a flame of keen desire for original thought and truth. And in this insistence on the need for exercising independent thought in listening (or reading) (*ἀσκεῖν ἄμα τῇ μαθήσει τὴν εὕρεσιν*),⁵ we have yet another illustration of Plutarch's ripe wisdom and his keen insight into psychological matters.

Leaving now Plutarch's theorising we turn to his achievement as a judicial critic and to such judgments as he makes on

¹ From *Sthenoboea*; see *Why the Pythia*, 405, F; see also vol. I, 63.

² *Symp.* 623, A.

³ *On Listening*, 45, E; also *Dinner Party of Seven Sages*, 147, F; cf. also Demetrius, *On Style*, § 222.

⁴ *On Listening*, 48, C.

⁵ *Ibid.* 48, D.

the literary art. That he held sensible views on the business of forming judgment would appear from certain remarks of his relating to what he regarded as the appropriate attitude and procedure. Thus the reader (or critic), he maintains, must approach a given work in the proper spirit.¹ He must for instance be free from all conceit and jealousy, he must harbour no prejudice either for or against; and since his aim is to arrive at a just and fair estimate he must be prepared to praise as well as to censure. Yet the awarding of praise, he notes, calls for caution and moderation; and he denounces the vague and indiscriminate terms then in fashion among many of the self-styled critics of his own (and earlier) days. In all great writers, he maintains, there is some element of merit along with defects, some power of moving and stirring, each in his own way; and this should be duly appreciated by the discerning critic. The awarding of meretricious praise, he adds in his picturesque fashion, is like crowning an athlete with a wreath of lilies or roses instead of with the more fitting laurel or wild olive. As for the ultimate test of what was good or bad in literature, that depended on the degree in which the true aim of literature had been achieved. If the effects on the listener (or reader) were of a tonic and healthy quality then the effort was one that was worthy of praise;² whereas if these results were wanting, no merits of diction or phrase could possibly supply the deficiency.

Commendable as were his views on the methods of forming literary judgment, Plutarch's actual achievement in that sphere is however somewhat disappointing, his practice falling far below the level of his theory. Most of such judgments as he gives are of an incidental kind, and are almost exclusively confined to early Greek writers. In his *Lives*, it is true, he denies that Cato resembled Lysias in his style; while he also distinguishes between the styles of the two Gracchi, that of Gaius being described as more impassioned and theatrical than that of Tiberius.³ But with these exceptions he takes no cognisance of Latin literature; and whatever the cause, it was an attitude that was shared by most of the later Greek critics. It is therefore from his treatment of Greek literature that

¹ *On Listening*, 44-6.

² *Ibid.* 42, A-B.

³ *Ti. Gracc.* 29.

Plutarch's performance as a judicial critic may best be gauged; and here to begin with may be noted his occasional use of critical commonplaces, as when, for instance, Archilochus is censured for his subject-matter, Parmenides for his verse, Euripides for his loquacity (λαλιά), and Sophocles for the unevenness (ἀνωμαλία) of his style.¹ Elsewhere, again, in his essay *On The Malignity of Herodotus*² he is found discussing the performance of the historian in question. He praises, it is true, the attractive style of Herodotus, its simplicity, its grace and elegance; but apart from this his judgment is biased by political prejudice. As a fervid Boeotian he denounces Herodotus, not on artistic grounds, but for recording so ruthlessly ignoble passages of Theban history; and it is clear that such treatment has little to do with literary criticism.

A more important contribution is however found in his *Comparison between Aristophanes and Menander*, where he makes use of the comparative method; and despite the truncated form of the work, Plutarch's views on the respective writers plainly emerge. From the first it is clear that the tests he applies are in close keeping with his conception of the nature and function of poetry. What he looks for is an imitation of life with some degree of plausibility, together with edifying effects from the works as wholes; and in each respect he finds Menander to be superior to Aristophanes. In the first place Aristophanes is said to lack verisimilitude in his treatment; that element of "probability" which made "imitation" convincing. Thus his diction, for one thing, is described as a mixture of incongruities; he mingles tragic elements with comic, the pompous with the pedestrian, obscure words with commonplace words, and passages of dignity with mere gossip or foolery, in a way that is at variance with the facts of life.³ Then, too, what is more, this lack of verisimilitude is held to extend to his characters, who are said to speak in a fashion irrespective of conditions or of what were regarded as the laws of human nature. According to those laws (which Horace had endorsed), to speak naturally was to speak in accordance with type. Thus a king, so it was said, should speak with dignity, an orator forcefully, a woman

¹ *On Listening*, 45, B; see p. 245 *supra*.

² *Moralia*, 854-74.

³ 853, C.

simply, a plain man prosily, and a low person coarsely.¹ Yet Aristophanes had observed none of these things. His characters were said to speak anyhow; so that one could not tell from the style who was speaking, whether a son or a father, a rustic or a god, a hag or a hero. From such breaches of decorum (*τὸ πρέπον*), on the other hand, Menander is said to be free.² His diction and style are described as harmoniously blended; they are said to cover a wide range of emotions and characters; and to be skilfully adapted to all types of persons, without ever departing far from the idiom of ordinary life. And in this way, it is claimed, he attains the necessary verisimilitude, by his faithful representation of all natures, conditions, and ages. Apart from this, however, Menander is said to surpass Aristophanes in one other respect, that is, in his healthy and effective appeal to all sorts and conditions of men. Thus in Aristophanes Plutarch detects a vein of cheap vulgarity, which is illustrated by his use of untimely tricks of speech; antitheses, word-jingles, and puns being employed generally in tasteless fashion.³ Then, too, it is argued, his wit was biting and rough; and malice seemed to animate his work throughout. His aim was apparently that of representing humanity at its worst; so that his rascals were knaves without saving qualities, his rustics idiotic rather than simple, while love he depicted, not as a joyous thing, but as mere licence.⁴ Such treatment, urges Plutarch, was calculated to please and inspire no one; it contributed nothing to what he regarded as the true end of poetry. And he further notes that whereas the crowd could not endure Aristophanes's presumption (*αὐθάδεια*), more serious minds loathed his licentiousness and malice. From such faults as these, however, Menander was said to be free. Verbal tricks he used sparingly and in season; his wit was devoid of bitterness or spite; while his plays won approval from all men, everywhere. Just as painters found relief in the soft colours of Nature, so your philosopher, adds Plutarch,⁵ is rested in turning to the works of Menander, where relief is found from the blazing lights of sterner studies. Such then is Plutarch's judgment on the respective merits of the two dramatists; and the inadequacy of

¹ 853, D.² 853, E-F.³ 853, B.⁴ 854, D.⁵ 854, C.

the appreciation, its lack of historic sense, and its blindness to those qualities that constitute the real greatness of Aristophanes, are matters so obvious as to need here no elaboration. The work has in short been regarded as a misguided piece of criticism, representing probably a Peripatetic tradition of hostility to the Old Comedy; and hence of doubtful authenticity as far as Plutarch is concerned. Of its ineptitude and shortsightedness there can be no question. Yet the critical standpoint throughout, and the general treatment as well, coincide too closely with Plutarchian characteristics to permit of serious doubt as to the presence of Plutarch's hand in the work. And this is confirmed by a passage in the *Symposiacs*,¹ where the Old Comedy is similarly censured for its indecency and scurrility; while the New Comedy of Menander is praised for its pleasing familiar phrase, its mixture of grave and gay, its general sanity and healthiness. The historical interest of the *Comparison*, however, must be described as of the first importance. Reflecting as it does contemporary standards and methods of judgment, the work also anticipates the part played by "verisimilitude" and "decorum" in criticism after the Renaissance;² it affords one of the best illustrations of such methods that have reached us from antiquity; and at the same time it gives a foretaste of the absurdities bound up with the system.

There yet remains to notice Plutarch's efforts in the field of Homeric criticism. And although he has not much to offer apart from scattered comments in his essays, the pronouncements he makes are by no means without their interest. That he was aware of the futile nature of much of the so-called criticism is suggested in more than one place. Thus for instance he mentions with disapproval "those critics who gather together all the lame and defective verses of Homer . . . and pass over an infinite sort of others which are excellently made";³ while elsewhere he adds that in the long secular struggle between objectors and the solvers of difficulties, he for his part would

¹ 712, A-D.

² See Spingarn, *Literary Criticism in the Renaissance*, pp. 84ff.; also his *Critical Essays of the Seventeenth Century*, Intro. xxxii, et passim.

³ *Letter to his Wife*, 611, B; quoted by Trench, *Plutarch*, p. 27.

range himself with the solvers. Yet while his aim is thus primarily constructive in kind, his actual achievement is but slight, being subject to serious limitations, both of method and doctrine. It is true that he disposes very briefly of the etymological quibbles of Cleanthes and Chrysippus;¹ and he also expresses the view that allegorical interpretations were nothing more than distortions and perversions.² Hence he rejects as mere absurdity the interpretation of the story of Hera's wooing of Zeus with the help of the magic girdle, according to which, it was said, the real truth conveyed was that of "the purification of the air in the neighbourhood of fire".³ Yet while he refuses to accept physical meanings of this kind, into the passage he reads a moralistic signification of his own. The fable, he maintains, is designed to show that favours obtained by means of cunning are but fickle and short-lived; and in this way he extracts from Homer a mass of moral teaching with an intimate bearing on life and conduct. Then, too, animated by the same moralistic aim, he attempts to interpret Homer in accordance with orthodox beliefs and accepted moral standards—sometimes at the expense of reason. Thus, whereas Homer, he concedes,⁴ represents the gods as brawling and indulging in unseemly violence, yet such passages, he claims, do not represent the poet's true conception, which is rather to be found in those places where they are depicted as living at ease and free from all sorrows. And the same element of "decorum" characterises his reading of the famous Nausicaa incident,⁵ where it is argued that if she spoke naturally, as a simple and passionate maiden, she was guilty of immodesty; but if her exclamation was due to admiration of Odysseus's breeding and bearing, then her wish was to be regarded as morally justified. It is evident that such prudish speculations as these do not come under the head of serious literary criticism, and that from the aesthetic point of view they are practically worthless. The truth was that Plutarch was here perpetuating the methods of the Alexandrian school of critics, while ignoring the principles laid down by Aristarchus, if not always observed by him. In failing to

¹ *How to study Poetry*, 31, E.

³ *Ibid.* 19, F.

⁴ *Ibid.* 20, E.

² *Ibid.* 19, E.

⁵ *Ibid.* 27, A.

recognise that Homeric poetry was the product of an earlier civilisation, when moral and religious ideas were still in their infancy, and that moreover such ideas had changed along with the development of intellect and society, Plutarch omits to make use of the historical line of approach to Homer; and as a result, his judgments have merely the interest of curiosity, being survivals to a late date of earlier modes of thinking. At the same time it must be added that Plutarch was not altogether devoid of the historical sense. In one place at least he shows himself to be alive to the influence of contemporary conditions on literature; and incidentally he contributes an illuminating comment on Greek literary history, when he traces the changes that had come over expression from the earliest times.¹ He begins with the age when verse was the natural medium, owing to the peculiar mentality and aptitude of men at that date. It was a day, he states, when metrical language was the current coin; when all men were listeners, and all alike found delight in what was sung. And as a result into verse were poured not only themes of love and conviviality, words of exhortation and rebuke, proverbs, hymns, prayers, and thanksgivings, but also such matters as history and philosophy, in short, everything that embodied thought of a more serious kind. Then came changes, both social and intellectual; and with them changes in taste and in the mode of expression. The new age made for a simpler way of life, finding beauty in economy and in a simplicity devoid of artifice or display. And these things were reflected in the literature of the time. "History", writes Plutarch,² "got down from its coach, and dropped metre. Truth was best sifted out from Myth in prose; Philosophy welcomed clearness and found it better to instruct than to astonish, so she pursued her inquiry in plain language." And with these developments in the direction of prose expression Plutarch is well content. He regards it all as a necessary evolution in the nature of things.

With these then as the main details of Plutarch's critical work, some idea may now be formed of the place he occupies

¹ *Why the Pythia*, 405, E.

² *Ibid.* 406, E (tr. A. O. Prickard, *op. cit.*).

in the critical development, and of the general significance and value of his performance. Detached to all appearances from contemporary interests and problems, he supplies, as we have seen, commentaries on a few Greek writers; he discusses methods of listening (or reading) more especially in connexion with poetry, while he also makes sporadic references to literature throughout his writings—a performance, it would seem, of a desultory kind, without any clear aims or objectives. Yet the animating motives of his work can scarcely be missed when viewed in the light of all the circumstances. To his Roman contemporaries, in the first place, he was a recognised interpreter of the Hellenic past, who reminded them anew of the glories and achievements of Greece; and when in his later years he enlarges on these subjects in writing, he does not fail to record something of the Greek teaching on art, along with his disquisitions on Greek history, religion, philosophy, and the like. As to the actual nature of his critical work, that was determined by several factors. For one thing, he would seem to have viewed with apprehension the place given to rhetoric in the education of the time. A facile and a polished style he refused to regard as an end in itself, while the Greek sophists of his day he frankly derided;¹ so that as a consequence rhetorical study formed no part of his critical writings. On the other hand he approved with equal emphasis of the part played by poetry as a factor in education. It was the traditional instrument of Greece; though at Rome its usefulness had been threatened by conflicting doctrines and influences. And it is to the strengthening of the position of poetry in the schools that he may be said to have devoted his main attention. For this purpose he therefore makes use of the accepted teaching of his day; those vast stores of Hellenistic learning which he had begun to acquire at Athens under the Alexandrian philosopher Ammonius, though the process was one that went on to the end of his days. And this factor it was that largely determined the form and nature of his critical work. It was, for instance, in accordance with the traditions of Alexandrian scholarship that he wrote his commentaries and works of a historico-

¹ Cf. *On Listening*, 42, A; *Why the Pythia*, 408, c.

literary kind; his main essay, again, was doubtless inspired by similar Stoic writings, notably one by Chrysippus, *How one should study Poetry*;¹ while traces of Hellenistic method and doctrine may not infrequently be found elsewhere in his work. Thus his conception of poetry is coloured by Peripatetic and Stoic doctrine alike. There are reminiscences of both Plato and Aristotle in his work; but more generally he adopts the position of later theorists such as Ariston of Chios, according to whom poetry was in essence ethical wisdom delightfully and effectively conveyed. Hence his stress on moral teaching and on the element of fiction (*πλάσμα, μῦθος, ψεῦδος*) in poetry.² To him poetry was merely a representation of human actions and characters with some degree of verisimilitude, mingled however with fictitious details to make it attractive. That it aimed at presenting life in its essential truth forms no part of his theory; of the ideal and universal truth revealed by Aristotle he takes no cognisance. In short, it is as an exponent of Hellenistic theories and tendencies that Plutarch figures in critical history at this time.

As a consequence of this his critical work has obvious and serious limitations. He puts forward, for instance, no poetic theory of an original kind; nor can his judgments or his appreciations be said to be either permanent or illuminating. In both departments alike he showed himself to be lacking in speculative audacity and vision; the aesthetic side of literature he relegated to a secondary and unimportant place; while he ignored completely the profounder truths, as well as the more subtle charms, of art. In short, preoccupied with philosophy, he seems to have shared with Epicurus the opinion that the wise man would "live poems" rather than write them.³ Yet to modern readers his critical writings have an interest of their own. And in the first place, in spite of all limitations, not the least fascinating aspect of those works is their historical significance. For what we have in them is none other than a glimpse—if only at second-hand—of Alexandrian critical thought; and no side-light on those vanished activities can be otherwise than valuable at this date. Thus by him we are introduced freely to

¹ See vol. I, 182.

² See vol. I, 174.

³ Diog. Laert. x, 121.

Alexandrian learning and scholarship; to doctrines not only of Gorgias, Plato, Aristotle, Theophrastus or Aristoxenus, but also of Aristarchus, Cleanthes, Chrysippus, Ariston of Chios and the like. We learn too of forgotten poets such as Kinesias or Melanthius, of plays no longer extant such as the *Psychostasia* of Aeschylus; while among the numerous quotations scattered throughout his pages not a few are unique, being drawn from works that have since disappeared. His writings indeed form a storehouse of quotations and anecdotes, referring indifferently to poetry or painting, sculpture or music. And among the more notable are perhaps the famous statement of Simonides,¹ the shrewd remark attributed to Corinna,² Demosthenes's pronouncement as to the need for "action" (*ὑπόκρισις*) in oratory,³ and Isocrates's description of the whetstone, which, unable to cut, could yet sharpen knives for that purpose;⁴ all of which give evidence of Plutarch's interest in the psychology of art. Nor are these the only attractions of Plutarch's critical writings for posterity; for from them emerges, as clearly as from the *Lives*, something of the charm of the author's personality. In spite of the entanglements of hampering and now obsolete theories, his highmindedness, his simplicity and culture are all plainly revealed; and to this contributed in no slight measure the form and style he chose for his work. With him originated for critical purposes that peculiarly modern form, the essay; and used as he uses it, with the careless ease of a conversationalist, it proved an excellent medium for his wealth of thought, his unending reflexions and reminiscences. It is true that his essays suffer somewhat from a lack of arrangement of thought; the Greek he employed has been described as "close and thorny"; while his fondness for similes drawn from natural and unnatural history is apt at times to prove tedious and irksome. Yet his *causeries* have all the merits of that way of writing; and in his essays there is an abundance of good things, if not criticism in the truest sense of the term. Of his influence on later criticism there is but little to say of a definite kind, though his popularity as a writer in the latter half of the

¹ See p. 312 *supra*.

² *The Glory of Ath.* 348, A; see also vol. I, 17.

³ *Lives of the Ten Orators*, 845, B.

⁴ *Ibid.* 838, E. Cf. Horace, *A. P.* 304.

sixteenth century would lead one to suppose that it was not wholly negligible. That his *Moral Essays* was translated by Amyot in 1576, by Philemon Holland in 1603, and that Montaigne among others found inspiration in its pages; these are familiar facts of literary history. Less certain however are the marks of its influence on later criticism, though they may possibly be traced in both form and substance alike. When Dryden, for example, describes "honest Montaigne" as his master in the new and "rambling" way of writing,¹ he was probably acknowledging a debt that was ultimately due to Plutarch; while, again, the attitude adopted by seventeenth-century critics generally in connexion with "verisimilitude" and "decorum" may have been not uninfluenced by Plutarch's earlier example.

There yet remains for consideration the critical contribution made by another Greek of this same period, whose work was in some respects akin to that of Plutarch. And in the writings of Dio of Prusa (A.D. 40-120), or Dio Chrysostom as he was called, will be found not a little that is of interest from the critical point of view. A much-travelled sophist, he was welcomed at Rome, first under Vespasian, and later under Nerva and Trajan; and his writings, which consist of some eighty orations or lectures, all bear more or less on matters of Greek culture. At first he was in sympathy with the new sophistic movement, believing in eloquence as an all-sufficing study. Latterly, however, he became convinced of the dangers of the movement; and from then on he figures as a moralising philosopher, intent on conveying to his hearers what was valuable in Greek philosophical thought. To his earlier period probably belonged some at least of his critical work; and this certainly holds true of the *Trojan Discourse* (*Or.* 11), in which he attempts to prove, in spite of the Homeric story, that Troy was never really captured—an exercise in dialectics, it would seem, not to be taken too seriously. Of the dates of the rest we can be less certain; though to this period may perhaps be assigned the incomplete *Discourse on Eloquence* (*Or.* 18), in which advice on that subject is tendered to a young man. In addition,

¹ See *Essays of Dryden*, ed. Ker, II, 255.

there were his *Discourse on the Indebtedness of Socrates to Homer* (Or. 55), the more famous *Olympic Discourse* (Or. 12), and the striking *Comparison between the Plays of Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides on Philoctetes* (Or. 52), with its picturesque opening descriptive of the way of life of a professional man of the times. Of these the last two represent what is best in Dio's critical work. In the one Phidias explains the laws which had guided him in creating his colossal image of Olympian Zeus, and incidentally throws light on the basic principles of poetry and sculpture. In the other an excellent use is made of the comparative method in the appreciation of Greek poets of first-rate importance.

From this it is clear that Dio's efforts in criticism were devoted partly to theorising, partly to forming judgments. And in the first place he has something to say on the matter of style,¹ though here the main interest lies in the writers he commends for imitation, who differ in rather a marked fashion from those of earlier and more orthodox prescriptions. His aim was apparently to put forward a practical scheme; and he suggests Homer, Euripides, and Menander among the poets, Herodotus, Thucydides, Xenophon, and Theopompus among the historians, Hyperides, Aeschines, and Lycurgus among the orators. The latter he prescribes in preference to Lysias and Demosthenes as being more within the reach of the novice in oratory; and he further commends for consideration some of the more recent stylists. Of greater interest, however, are his comments on art in its wider aspects; and more particularly those occasioned by his discourse on the sculpture of Phidias. There for instance he defends the symbolism underlying the plastic art of Greece, which expressed the divine nature in human form, as opposed to the symbolism of the barbarians, who represented the divine image by means of animal shapes.² He points out that no artist can give adequate expression to pure intelligence (*νοῦς καὶ φρόνησις*), since he can know nothing of its actual nature. Yet Greek art, he maintains, comes nearer to reality when it invests the divine with human form as the most adequate symbol of intelligence. And in thus claiming for Greek art this supreme symbolic quality, this power of

¹ Or. 18 (Budé, II, 314 ff.).

² *Ibid.* 12, § 59 (Budé, I, 218).

bodying forth the invisible in visible and suggestive form, he calls attention to an artistic truth which had hitherto received but slight attention; though the argument was to be carried one step further by Philostratus at a later date. At the same time he also calls attention to the limitations of plastic art as compared with poetry; and the familiar commonplace he puts forward with fresh life and vigour.¹ Thus he differentiates, for one thing, between the respective media in which poet and sculptor work. The poet, he explains, has in words a medium more fluid and easily moulded; one capable of infinite variety, endowed with all the magic of colour and sound, and capable of expressing every shade of thought, emotion, and fancy. And this he illustrates from the practice of Homer; from his use of various dialects (Doric, Ionic, and Attic), of old words, new words, metaphors, and the like; in short, of everything that would add to the strength or grace of his expression. As opposed to this, he describes the limitations of the sculptor's medium; a material hard and solid, stubborn to handle, and incapable of the finer shades, the more elusive charm, of words. Then, too, he points out the effects of these differences; the wider activities possible to the poet, and the more comprehensive nature of the poetic art. Thus the poet, he explains, can represent actions or speech, rest or movement, the passage of time and the effects of illusion generally. The sculptor, on the other hand, is confined to the single attitude, the single moment; in a single form he has to express all he wishes to convey. And with this teaching of Dio's may be compared the doctrine embodied in Lessing's *Laokoon*; though it is to Simonides, and not to Dio, that reference is made in the Preface to that work.

Of yet greater interest, however, are Dio's literary judgments which are for the most part concerned with Homer and the great Greek dramatists. And whereas the former are of historical significance only, the latter are by no means without positive value; indeed they take rank among the most valuable appreciations that have come down from antiquity. The remarks on Homer, in the first place, are all of a destructive kind. Dio

¹ *Or.* 12, §§ 66-71 (Budé, I, 221-2).

attacks and discredits both Homer's facts and his treatment, applying mainly for that purpose the tests of "verisimilitude" and "decorum". He begins by pointing to defects of structure; Homer's haphazard way of commencing his story, his omission of Paris's crime—the cause of all the trouble—and his subsequent failure to deal with stirring events, such as the capture of the city or the deaths of the various heroes. In short, Homer is charged with selecting only unimportant and trivial incidents, with a view to distorting truth for his own specific ends.¹ After this Dio proceeds to point out what he regards as Homer's neglect of "verisimilitude" throughout his narrative; his frequent breaches of "decorum" and his use of flagrant improbabilities. Thus it was said to be absurd, in the first place, that Hera, the consort of Zeus, should accept Paris, a mere shepherd, as judge of her beauty;² or again, that Paris, enamoured of Helen whom he had never seen, should have been able to induce her to elope with him, a man of alien race.³ Equally strange, however, was the fact that Agamemnon, who was but remotely concerned with Helen, should have led the Grecian hosts against Troy, whereas her brothers, Castor and Pollux, did not join the expedition.⁴ But then the whole work, added Dio, was full of such things. That the wooden horse, for instance, with a whole army inside should have escaped detection, in spite of the prophetess among the Trojans;⁵ that Achilles, alone and unarmed, should have put to flight thousands, only to be slain in the end by Paris, the most cowardly of men;⁶ these and other so-called absurdities are collected by Dio in the course of his remarks, and they support his contention concerning the lack of "verisimilitude" in Homer. Of the value of such a commentary, however, there is but little to be said. For Dio's arguments had been discounted by earlier theories; by Horace's approval of Homer's beginning (*nec gemino . . . ab ovo*), and by the recognition of accepted popular legends as "real events" by the Greeks. It has been usual to regard the whole discussion as an illuminating, if perverse, example of sophistic ingenuity. But it has also a further interest of an historical kind. In a sense it

¹ *Or.* 11, §§ 24–33 (Budé, I, pp. 146ff.).

⁴ §§ 62–70.

² *Or.* 11, § 12.

⁵ § 125.

³ § 54.

⁶ § 126.

may be regarded as a representative piece of criticism, inasmuch as it illustrates the survival of Alexandrian critical methods, in which "verisimilitude" and "decorum" played so conspicuous a part.

Criticism of a more serious and fruitful kind appears, however, in Dio's *Comparison*¹ relating to the respective treatments of the Philoctetes myth by the three Greek dramatists. And since here will be found an almost unique specimen of comparative criticism, based as it is on a study of the actual texts, and embracing matters of plotting, characterisation, and the like, the discussion is one that calls for some amount of detailed consideration. To begin with, it must be noted that Dio's comments supply information of value regarding the lost plays of Aeschylus and Euripides; that of Sophocles alone having come down complete. So that from the discussion, and from the prose paraphrase of the opening scene of Euripides's play supplied elsewhere by Dio,² a shrewd idea may be formed of the plays no longer extant. The main outline of the story is familiar from epic sources. Philoctetes is marooned on the island of Lemnos by the Greeks on their way to Troy. After ten years have passed, with much suffering for Philoctetes and many set-backs for the Grecian hosts, it is learnt that victory can be won only with the help of Neoptolemus, son of Achilles, together with that of Philoctetes and his bow. Whereupon messengers are despatched to Scyros and Lemnos to induce the two heroes to rejoin the Greeks before Troy; and here the several dramatists take up the story and work out the sequel, each in his own way. It is upon the return of Philoctetes that all three dramatists concentrate; and from Dio we learn that Odysseus (mortal foe of Philoctetes) was the messenger in the play of Aeschylus, that he won the confidence of Philoctetes by trumped-up stories of disasters to the Greeks and of the disgraceful end of the hated Odysseus, and thus succeeded in his task of persuading the exile. In Euripides's version, we learn from the same source, Odysseus is again the messenger; though now he is disguised by Athena, and accompanied by Diomedes. The situation is moreover complicated by a counter-

¹ Or. 52 (Budé, II, 135 ff.).

² Or. 59 (Budé, II, 167 ff.).

appeal from Trojan envoys; but Odysseus is once more successful in his mission, this time probably by an appeal to patriotism. And lastly, by Sophocles further changes are introduced into the story. Neoptolemus is now the companion of Odysseus; and it is Neoptolemus who first wins the confidence of Philoctetes, deprives him of his bow, and then, filled with compunction for the deceit he has perpetrated, returns the bow in spite of Odysseus's protests. Philoctetes in the meantime remains obdurate; but finally yields on hearing of the will of Zeus as declared by Heracles.

Apart from the partial restoration of the themes of the lost plays, Dio's *Comparison* has however the further merit of discussing in illuminating fashion some of the artistic features of the plays in question. And in the first place it is with the plots that he is largely concerned. He applies to all three the test of "verisimilitude," inquiring into the degree in which each dramatist has attained semblance of actuality or truth to life. In Aeschylus, to begin with, he finds some apparent improbabilities; Philoctetes's failure to recognise his enemy Odysseus, the simple nature of Odysseus's deceit, the presence of a Chorus made up of Lemnians, or again, Philoctetes's narrative of his sufferings to a body of Lemnians who were obviously familiar with the facts. In each case, however, Dio points out, the improbability is more apparent than real, so that Aeschylus nowhere makes use of unconvincing details. Thus he contends that whereas a lapse of ten years was not in itself enough to explain Philoctetes's forgetfulness, yet his weakness and his sufferings would amply account for his behaviour in this respect.¹ The deceit practised by Odysseus, again, would seem almost too simple to be true. Yet its very simplicity, urges Dio, was in keeping with the heroic character; and moreover in some ways it was even more probable than a more subtle procedure. No great ingenuity, he adds, was surely needed to trick a sick and crippled man; while the lies told by Odysseus were rendered plausible by the length of the Trojan campaign and the actual troubles of the Greeks.² Then, too, there was the apparent inconsistency in the choice of a Lemnian Chorus,

¹ § 6.

² § 10.

seeing that no effective aid had been given by the Lemnians to Philoctetes during the ten long years. Yet, argues Dio,¹ such neglect cannot have been complete; and in any case it was unreasonable to object to this particular detail, in view of the glaring improbabilities that abounded in other tragedies—messengers performing journeys of several days in one day, and the like. And lastly, there was the incident of Philoctetes unnecessarily relating his troubles to the Lemnians; though here, suggests Dio, there is surely no improbability. On the contrary he regards it as profoundly true to life; for men in misfortune, he explains,² are wont to be garrulous, often boring their listeners with their endless stories. Concerning the plotting of the other two dramatists and their skill in attaining the requisite truth to life, Dio has less to say. He states very definitely that both Sophocles and Euripides had handled their material in the most convincing fashion (*πιθανότης*), that both were wholly successful in avoiding improbabilities;³ and for the rest he is content with an occasional illustration of these things. Thus Euripides, he points out,⁴ had minimised the difficulty of the Lemnian Chorus by apologising for their neglect of Philoctetes, and by bringing on Actor, a Lemnian, who is said to have visited him—devices, adds Dio, which, while technically correct (*ἀκριβής*), were nevertheless less “tragic” than the simple method of Aeschylus. And as for Sophocles, he had rendered, in Dio’s opinion, the whole story yet more probable and convincing, by making Neoptolemus a main factor in the action, by representing Odysseus in hiding throughout, and by forming his Chorus, not of Lemnian natives, but of sailors who had come with Odysseus on his expedition.⁵

But while it is thus with considerations of plot that Dio is chiefly concerned, his comments include other aspects of the plays as well. What he gives are in reality his impressions of the plays as wholes, their characterisation, their styles, the differing nature of their appeals; and by his use of comparison he succeeds in making his distinctions clear. Thus he enlarges, to begin with, on the grandeur and the old-world atmosphere of the Aeschylean play.⁶ This he attributes to the dramatist’s

¹ § 7.² § 9.³ §§ 11, 14, 15.⁴ § 8.⁵ § 15.⁶ §§ 4-5.

daring originality both in thought and phrase, which he describes as appropriate, not merely to tragedy, but to tragedy which dealt with the heroes of old. Hence, too, the largeness of utterance and the directness of Aeschylus's treatment. His story is said to contain nothing trivial or mean, no excess of words, no petty intrigues. And in keeping with these features was the character of Odysseus, who, though shrewd and crafty, had nothing in his composition of the vices of a more sophisticated age. In his simplicity, indeed, was seen something of the ancient virtue; and compared with the ethical standards of a later day his guile appeared little more than artlessness out-of-date. When Dio turns next to the play of Euripides it is to find there the exact counterpart of the play of Aeschylus.¹ For Euripides's keenness of intellect, his extraordinary power of expression, his never-failing care for detail, the charm and moral quality of his lyrical utterance, for all these things Dio professes the highest admiration. Yet what strikes him most are the modifications made in the story by Euripides, as a result of which are introduced elements of subtlety and complication wholly foreign to Aeschylus's simpler treatment. Nowhere, he states, does Euripides attempt to deal with his narrative simply; and he further notes that such changes were conditioned by the nature of Euripides's genius, which he describes as essentially forensic (*πολιτικωτάτη*)² and rhetorical in kind. Thus Euripides's treatment throughout, he asserts, was influenced by his desire to make use of all the resources of expression. He complicates the action, for instance, by introducing Diomedes along with Odysseus, and by bringing on to the scene the Trojan embassy, both of which devices supplied further opportunities for speech and argument. Yet more significant, however, is Euripides's method of opening his play. Odysseus is represented in the Prologue as debating in his own mind whether he was as wise as he was popularly supposed to be, seeing that he rushed heedlessly into dangers which could easily have been avoided. And to the question thus raised Odysseus himself returns an answer. His seeming foolishness, he argues, was due to that desire for greatness which was

¹ §§ 11-14.

² § 11; see Jebb, *Philoctetes*, p. xxi, footnote.

everywhere characteristic of the noblest minds. And here, notes Dio, was an argument reminiscent of the best traditions of the deliberative assembly. It reflected Euripides's main bias; as indeed did his dialogue generally, which was everywhere full of forensic and oratorical turns (*πολιτικῶς*). In short, it was this rhetorical colouring which seemed to Dio the outstanding feature of Euripides's treatment; as he himself puts it, "the play was capable of rendering the greatest assistance to those engaged in public debate". Of the Sophoclean play, again, the impression formed by Dio is yet different in kind.¹ In it he detects features which distinguish it from the others, having neither the bold originality and simplicity of the one, nor the realism (*ἀκριβές*), the shrewdness, the rhetoric (*πολιτικόν*) of the other. The lyrics of Sophocles, he concedes, are less sententious than those of Euripides, though in charm and nobility they are not wanting; and indeed Sophocles's utterance throughout is said to be stately and magnificent, combining in the highest degree sweetness, elevation, and grandeur. And this element Dio regards as the characteristic feature of the play, something that gives to it a colouring and a fragrance of its own. It is seen, for instance, in the characterisation, which is described as wonderfully dignified and noble throughout; the Sophoclean Odysseus, so Dio points out, being far gentler, less astute (*ἀπλούστερον*) than Euripides had made him, while Neoptolemus is distinguished by the generosity and magnanimity of his nature, being single-minded and chivalrous in the highest degree. Nor is it seemingly without its significance that Dio relates the whole story of Neoptolemus's conduct; his dislike of craft at first, his subsequent deceit, and the wave of pity that finally urged him to make full restitution. Here attention is directed to the human side of the narrative; and it was probably the consciousness of this element in the play that induced Dio to describe it as the most tragic (*τραγικωτάτη*) of the three.

It is therefore clear that in this *Comparison* of Dio's we have criticism of an unusual and a most valuable kind. Not only has he made an effective use of the comparative method, but

¹ §§ 15-17.

he has shown throughout as well a keen insight into literary values and a genuine appreciation all too rare among ancient critics. The main distinctions he draws are for the most part familiar in kind; but his treatment never becomes commonplace, owing to his reasoned statements. He gives full and sufficient reasons for the faith that is in him, supporting his arguments by references to various aspects of the dramatic art. And if, as has been said, comparison and analysis are the chief tools of criticism, then Dio has made a good use of the best of instruments. Nor is sane judgment lacking in the methods he employs; though everywhere is heard the personal note, suggested partly by the intimate opening, partly also by the enthusiasm with which judgment is expressed. Thus he tests all three plays rigorously in regard to their truth to life; but he discards as irrelevant that test of a false "decorum" which had led to such absurdities in his Homeric criticism. Moreover with unerring taste he has gone to the heart of the business, assigning to each dramatist his own most striking excellences, unprejudiced by the modernity of Euripides or those rhetorical qualities of his which appealed so powerfully to later ages. And in attributing to Sophocles the most tragic effects he was but following in the steps of Aristotle and "Longinus". It is therefore in the *Comparison* that Dio's best and most lasting critical work is undoubtedly seen. Apart from this he has not much that is substantial to offer; though his comparative estimate of Greek dramatists, his Homeric criticism, and his interest in the wider aspects of art, all suggest a comparison with Plutarch's work. In the history of criticism he is, however, not without his interest; though to all appearances he exercised no influence on later workers. Like Plutarch, he carries on the tradition of Alexandrian criticism, and thus supplies further evidence as to the variety and the vitality of critical activities at the end of the first century A.D.

With Dio we have now reached the last of the critics associated with the first century A.D. And here, it would seem, is an appropriate place for concluding this narrative of critical development. For although criticism of sorts went on right down to the Middle Ages, it never again attained its earlier

significance and value; while, incidentally, it might be added, most of the critical writers who were influential at the Renaissance have by this time been mentioned. Moreover, a full statement had by now been made of classical doctrine; and to that statement little of substantial value was to be added later, in spite of the vast scholarship that was to be devoted to literary studies. In the technical treatises, for instance, which belonged to the succeeding centuries, in miscellanies such as those of Aulus Gellius and Macrobius, or again, in the countless works of commentators and scholiasts, there will be found, it is true, an abundance of learning, frequent references to literature, as well as discussions on grammar, lexicography, and the like; but on the other hand, little that can be called criticism in the highest sense of the term. Of greater interest for our present purpose are therefore certain contributions made in the age that immediately succeeded; and with them, as a sort of aftermath of earlier activities, our account of the critical achievement may perhaps most fittingly close.

In the first place no account of ancient criticism can omit some mention of Lucian (*c.* A.D. 125-92), that most versatile of Greek satirists, who, a Syrian born, resembled Dio Chrysostom in this, that, whereas for the first half of his life he was a popular sophist, his latter years, which were spent at Athens and later in Egypt, he devoted to combating the intellectual errors and abuses of his time. His methods throughout were those of ridicule; and he attacked with light raillery the charlatanry and affectations of his day wherever he found them, whether in the spheres of morality, religion, literature, or art.¹ His literary criticism is therefore part of a larger criticism of life; and in the contemporary world of letters he finds much that provides him with material for his satire. Thus in his *Double Accusation*, for instance, he gives his reasons for abandoning the pursuit of rhetoric, explaining that latterly she had become a courtesan, unfaithful to her earlier ideals; and again, in his *Parasite* he continues the attack, by parodying those discussions on rhetoric which had gone on between

¹ See M. Croiset, *Essai sur la vie et les œuvres de Lucien*, Paris, 1882, for an admirable account of his works.

philosophers and rhetoricians from time immemorial. Elsewhere, in his *Pseudologist or Maker of Solecisms* he has a fling against the grammarians, whom he describes as pedants, obsessed with the idea of "correctness", of which quality however they themselves were sadly in need. In his *True History*, again, he burlesques the wild and fabulous stories common to poets, historians, and travellers; while in the *Discussion with Hesiod* he ridicules as mere superstitious fancy the claim so often advanced for poets, that being inspired they were none other than interpreters of the gods.

It is, however, against the new sophistry that Lucian launches his main attack; and while many of the earlier critics had already sensed the dangers of the movement, by none were its evils so vividly depicted or so scathingly decried—partly because, no doubt, it was only in the second century A.D. that the full measure of the evil became clearly apparent. His works bearing on the subject are, first, the treatise *How to write History*, and secondly, the two lively satires, *The Teacher of Rhetoric* and *Lexiphanes*; and in each he lays bare some of the contemporary foibles. Among the more glaring abuses of the time were the pretentious histories, written by sophists, dealing with the Parthian War which had ended in A.D. 165. In effect they were nothing more than exercises in declamation, defective in matter and manner alike; and Lucian in his discourse *How to write History* deals faithfully with the new craze, holding up to ridicule its manifold absurdities while reminding his readers of saner ways. He begins with a trenchant criticism of the faults of such historians, and then explains his conception of sounder methods; his first demand being that the historian should know his subject, his second, that he should also know how to set it forth. And to this matter of exposition Lucian devotes considerable attention. He insists, for instance, on the need for certain moral qualities in the writer; he points out the important part played by arrangement or "composition"; and he also deals briefly with the requisite qualities of style. The work is thus of a serious kind; not strictly speaking perhaps a treatise on history, so much as a discussion on sane writing in general. And as such its pages are full of good things; not the least being

the ruthless analysis of the sophistic manner. Work of a different type is represented in the *Teacher of Rhetoric*, which takes the form of a burlesque of those manuals of oratory which were conventionally dedicated to some youthful friend of the author. A tone of irony is adopted by Lucian throughout. The sophistic training and the sophistic practices are described in detail and strongly recommended, as being more pleasant and efficacious than those characteristic of the old schools of rhetoric. There is, in fact, no trick, no imposture however bare-faced, that should not eagerly be cultivated. And the argument, which is developed with convincing naturalness and force, affords a delightful instance of Lucian's satire in his best and breeziest vein. Another satire of an uproarious kind is the *Lexiphanes*, in which Lucian ridicules the fashion for larding a discourse with obsolete Attic expressions—one of the sophistic tricks already alluded to in the *Teacher of Rhetoric*. Lexiphanes is represented as one of these eccentrics. He has written a book, *The Banquet*, in emulation of Plato; but the work is unintelligible by reason of its masses of outlandish and far-fetched words. For this he is taken to task by one Lycinus (Lucian), who indignantly hands him over to the doctor, Sopolis, for treatment. He is duly purged of his malignant vocabulary; and with cleansed mind he is then able to profit by the advice of Lycinus as to healthier courses to be followed in the future. This work, again, is full of Lucian's characteristic humour and fancy; and the situation, it might be noted, was subsequently used with effect by Ben Jonson in his *Poetaster* (v, i).

From what has so far been said of Lucian's critical work, the nature of his contribution to criticism is not difficult to see; and a closer examination of those works but confirms this estimate. No one, for instance, can mistake the vividness and the force with which he has held up to derision the literary impostors of his day. And his survey is as detailed as it is comprehensive; so that we have brought before our eyes the sophists as they lived and spoke and wrote. As historians,¹ for instance, we see them indulging in a medley of lies and fables, completely ignorant of the facts; or bidding for popularity by

¹ *How to write History*, §§ 6–33.

their unctuous flattery of Romans, their disparagement of the enemy; or again, making an ostentatious display of syllogisms, invocations to the Muses, and such like devices; while imparting to their confused narratives an occasional air of simplicity that accorded but ill with their grandiose and vulgar expressions. Elsewhere further light is thrown on their training, their ideals and methods.¹ For them, it would seem, no preliminary instruction was needed, no arduous and prolonged study of the great masters; but merely ignorance, audacity, a well-sounding voice, and above all, a striking and an exquisite appearance. In their actual speech (or writing) certain tricks were recommended; the lavish use, for instance, of words long out-of-date, or of brand-new ones equally far-fetched and astonishing, or again, such precious turns as "laving" (for washing), or "the rim of the dark" (for the dawn).² Such devices were held to argue the culture and refinement of the speaker (or writer); and if perchance, in taking these liberties, some solecism were committed, it was enough to cite some authority, imaginary, if need be. Then, too, with his vocabulary thus assured, it was necessary for the orator (or writer) to attain a never-failing fluency. His aim was, briefly, "to speak right on", without forethought or hesitation, careless of logic and reason alike, careful only to achieve a heated and an unbroken flow of words. And the artistic effects thus obtained might be accentuated by due attention to other matters. It was wise, for instance, in dealing with an Athenian audience, to make shrewd references to Marathon, Salamis, Leonidas, and others; while excellent results often followed from angry outbursts or shows of violence. But what after all was really essential was the engagement of paid admirers to start the applause and to head the procession accompanying the orator from the scene. And if success were denied in spite of these tactics, then all that was left for the orator was to abuse his audience and his more successful rivals as well. Such then is the gist of Lucian's description of the contemporary sophists and their ways; and that his censure was on the whole just, in

¹ *Teacher of Rhetoric*, §§ 9-21.

² Tr. J. D. Denniston (*Greek Literary Criticism*, p. 219).

spite of occasional exaggeration for satirical purposes, is shown by a comparison with Philostratus's *Lives of the Sophists*, where the same insincerity, vulgarity, and lack of scruple are abundantly illustrated.¹

Yet the unmasking of abuses in the contemporary world of letters is not all that Lucian has to offer in the way of literary criticism. A master of parody and burlesque as he is, one whose training as a sophist had sharpened his wit and pointed his expression, he is also something more than a brilliant satirist whose aim was solely destructive in kind. With his piquant satire he mingles many just observations, much sound advice; and though in no sense a systematic teacher, he nevertheless has something positive to say to his age as well. In his work on the writing of history will be found perhaps the most definite expression of his views;² and there, as has already been suggested, much of what he says has a bearing on literature in general. Nothing, for instance, is more significant than the stress he lays upon the necessity for sound subject-matter. The importance of *inventio* had been part of his rhetorical creed; but to an age given over to verbal dexterity and foolish artifice, nothing could have been more timely than this recall to "the source and fountain-head of all good writing", as defined by Horace. Then, too, there is his advice as to the arrangement or "composition" of the subject-matter. The facts in historical writing, he points out, must be collected, then viewed in their proper perspective, and thus turned into history by the shaping process of art. First the mind of the reader should be tuned to what is to follow; then should come the narrative, closely linked and free from digressions; and if discourses were introduced they should be appropriate to the respective personages. And these injunctions he repeats in effect, when he points out to Lexiphanes the necessity for first arranging his thoughts before attempting to express them in words and phrases.³ Concerning the requisites of style, moreover, he has also something to say. Thus the historian, he asserts, should aim above all at clearness and simplicity; he should use but few ornaments, no sensational or unnatural Figures; though in the more

¹ See M. Croiset, *Essai*, pp. 255 ff.

² §§ 41-7.

³ *Lexiphanes*, § 24.

emotional passages the grander effects of poetry might also be employed. And this teaching is likewise repeated in more general form in his injunctions to Lexiphanes, where he warns him against the "windflowers" of speech, and advises him henceforth to sacrifice to the Graces and lucidity.¹

The main substance of Lucian's critical teaching is therefore tolerably clear. It is an attempt to appeal to the common sense of his contemporaries; to remind them of what was sound in the old doctrines of *inventio*, *dispositio*, and *elocutio*; and in general to recall them to the healthier traditions of earlier times. And upon this theme he enlarges in more than one way. He insists for instance on the need for hard and prolonged work; the road to the heights, he points out, was long and toilsome, requiring efforts not of days or months but whole Olympiads.² Then, too, he maintains that for success in literature certain moral qualities were needed; above all, the quality of sincerity. And this he illustrates in connexion with the historian, who was required to be a lover of truth, independent in judgment, free from all prejudice, and capable, as the comic poets put it, of "calling a spade a spade" (τὰ σῦκα σῦκα).³ Most significant of all is, however, his constant reference to the great exemplars of the past, and his acceptance of genuine Attic standards as final in literature. It is thus in the names of Thucydides and Xenophon, Aristophanes and Plato, Demosthenes, Euripides and others, that he condemns the foolish innovators of his day; and what he has obviously in mind is the revival of ancient virtues, the weighty subject-matter of the Attic masters expressed in clear and simple form, and in words sanctioned by custom and free from all affectation. He is in short one of the last exponents of classical doctrine; and as such he figures in the critical development. Reminiscent of Aristophanes, as he is, in views and methods alike, he cannot be said to have exercised any great influence on his own age or later ages; possibly because the day had gone by for such a revival as he aimed at. Yet he called attention to not a few truths of a valuable kind; and he is something more than he himself

¹ *Lexiphanes*, § 24.

² *Teacher of Rhetoric*, § 9.

³ *Ibid.* § 41.

claimed to be—a Diogenes rolling his barrel so as not to be idle.¹

Of the remaining writers who contributed to criticism at this date but little need be said; though mention might briefly be made of one or two of the more significant, as indicating the trend of critical activities at the time. There was for instance Hermogenes of Tarsus (second century A.D.), who in his *Progymnasmata* or *Preliminary Exercises* perpetuated much that was vicious in the earlier treatment of rhetoric. His work, embodying a system of subtle distinctions and technical rules mostly trivial and absurd, had merely the result of stultifying rhetorical studies; and his later importance, which undoubtedly was considerable, was due solely to the multitude of his followers and commentators. Nor can more than historical interest be attached to the work of Fronto² (c. A.D. 100–75), the tutor of Marcus Aurelius. In him culminates the antiquarian movement of the preceding century; and his object in particular was that of giving new life to the Latin language and literature, by a reversion to the style of pre-Ciceronian times, and the development of an *Elocutio Novella* based largely on archaisms and words taken from ordinary life. He thus represents a reaction against the earlier classicism; and although he is inspired by the same dissatisfaction with orthodox standards as had led to the pronouncements of Tacitus, his outlook is distinctly narrower, and his views in consequence less fruitful and suggestive. As for his literary judgments, they are largely coloured by the same antiquarian bias. He finds most to praise in such writers as Cato and Sallust, Plautus, Ennius, and Pacuvius; while his main censures are directed against the affectations of Seneca, and the tasteless repetitions and verbiage he detects in Lucan. In one writer alone—the sophist Philostratus of Tarsus (c. A.D. 172–245)—of a slightly later date, do we find anything of outstanding critical value; and that in a statement incidentally made in one of his works. His *Lives of the Sophists* has previously been mentioned; while his *Letters* are famous in literary history as having provided the material

¹ *How to write History*, § 5.

² See M. D. Brock, *Essays on Fronto and his Age*, Cambridge, 1911.

for Ben Jonson's beautiful mosaic, his immortal song *To Celia*.¹ Equally memorable, however, is the passage in his *Life of Apollonius of Tyana*, where Apollonius discusses with Thespesion the respective methods employed by the Greeks and the Egyptians in their artistic representations of the gods.² The matter had already been raised by Dio Chrysostom; and since the present discussion proceeds on much the same lines, it would seem that Philostratus was not uninfluenced by earlier theorists. Apollonius begins by claiming for Greek plastic art a better and more reverent expression of the divine nature than was afforded by the ignoble animal symbolism of the Egyptians. Thereupon he is asked by Thespesion for the grounds of his assurance; whether the Greeks perchance had acquired a first-hand knowledge of the divine form, or whether it was that some guiding influence had been at work. To this Apollonius replies that the Greeks had indeed been guided, and by something full of wisdom, other than imitation. It was, in short, imagination (*φαντασία*) that had wrought these forms, a faculty, he added, more skilled than imitation; for whereas imitation could only fashion what it had seen, imagination would make the unseen its subject in accordance with what really is (*ὑποθήσεται γὰρ αὐτὸ πρὸς τὴν ἀναφορὰν τοῦ ὄντος*).³ In other words, it would idealise the real, unhampered by the limitations of the imitative process; and here was obviously a pronouncement of the first importance. It not only completed the argument begun by Dio Chrysostom, and made explicit what had been implied in "Longinus's" praise of the unbounded flights of Homer; it also supplied what had hitherto been wanting in the Aristotelian conception of an idealising imitation, and was not far removed from the idea of Plotinus, that "the arts create much for themselves". In the sphere of ancient criticism this antithesis of the two principles, imitation and imagination, stood for something new. It marked for one thing the end of the earlier system of thought; it also inaugurated a new outlook in the psychology of art, for with the Neo-Platonists, who followed, *φαντασία* and

¹ See Sandys, *History of Classical Scholarship*, I, 335, for extracts from the *Letters*.

² *Life of Apollonius*, VI, 19.

³ *Ibid.* VI, 19.

not *μίμησις* became the parent-faculty of the fine arts. Thus was the notion of the creative imagination expounded once and for all; though many centuries were to elapse before its true significance was realised, owing doubtless to the vogue of the Aristotelian term "imitation". In the course of time appeared Coleridge with his more ample teaching; but that antiquity was not wholly devoid of some glimpses of the truth is shown at least by this famous definition of Philostratus.

CHAPTER IX

CONCLUSION

SUCH then is the story of the critical effort associated with Greece and latterly with Rome during those all-important ages to which we have limited our survey; and it remains to remark on the performance as a whole, and on its significance for antiquity and for later ages. The main lines of the development have already been traced. First came, as we have seen, the formulation of certain fundamental doctrines by Plato and Aristotle; then a period of confused ideas, distinguished chiefly for attempts at systematising which narrowed the critical vision; and lastly, there were the activities at Rome, concerned for the most part with certain immediate problems connected with poetry, oratory, and prose style. In this way a beginning had been made with most of the functions of criticism; a considerable body of critical literature had in consequence appeared. And from beginning to end some sort of continuity had been preserved, the whole movement being inspired by certain constant ideals. Thus it may be said that the key to the criticism at Rome lay in the transmission of Greek ideas and theories, its primary object being the revival of the literary traditions of ancient Greece. At the same time that task was accomplished but imperfectly; there was much in the earlier art that eluded the critical grasp. And Graeco-Roman critics in consequence, despite their positive achievements, were found lacking as intermediaries between ancient Greece and the modern world.

Yet this is not to say that great and lasting results were not the outcome of these manifold activities. Indeed, as we have seen in the detailed accounts already given, the work done in more than one field was of first-rate and permanent value; and this is eminently true of Plato and Aristotle, of Plato with his splendid audacities, his spiritual insight, of Aristotle with his profound doctrines, his sound and original methods. With them, it would be true to say, criticism had its real beginnings. They were the bell-ringers, up first to call others to worship;

and after them, all that was necessary was to understand, to develop, and to extend. Then, too, they were instrumental in posing some of the fundamental problems, problems that have continued to exercise men's minds throughout the ages; and to have pointed out the way to later ages, this is a claim that may be made for Plato and Aristotle, and for them alone. Nor was their work merely that of pioneers; for despite the vicissitudes to which their work has since been subjected, they have had something to say to all the ages. By their powers of intuition and reflexion alike they anticipated more than one of the great truths which the experience of later ages has taught to men; and they reveal in the germ not a few ideas that have since been rediscovered. Enlargements of knowledge, it may be, have led to some modification of their principles; but their foundations remain, the inspiration and the starting-point of modern inquiries. So that, both intrinsically and historically, their work must be described as of lasting importance. They were the first in connexion with literature "to use deliberate reflexion on past experience to modify future experience"; and there is a sense in which it would be true to say that of all ancient critical writings their works are among the most modern.

And if this be true of the early Greek criticism, important in yet another sense is the culmination of the movement as represented in the Graeco-Roman critics of a later date. Thus by Cicero and Horace first, then by Dionysius, "Longinus", and others, was inaugurated the doctrine of classicism, according to which the true standards and methods of literature were to be found among the ancient Greeks, who were therefore to be imitated in their processes and their effects. And here was undoubtedly a far-reaching development, significant in its essential teaching and in its later manifestations as well. The causes which led to the establishment of this doctrine lay, as we have seen, in the conditions of the time, and in the desire to place literature on stable and worthy foundations amidst the shifting and conflicting influences then prevalent. And under these conditions men turned with a sure instinct to the works of classical Greece, accepting them, and them only, as

the models for literature, and drawing from them principles to guide their own efforts.

Of the soundness in the main of the position thus adopted there can be little doubt. It was an attempt, in the first place, to fashion literature in accordance with the highest artistic ideals then known, ideals moreover that to this day retain their pre-eminence. And in addition to this, the imitative process bound up with such teaching was conceived of in no narrow or constricting sense; it was something vastly different from the slavish and formal copying prescribed at a later date. Thus Horace advocates the adaptation of Greek measures to the Roman lyre, with a view to the creation of something new. With Dionysius, again, imitation is "an activity of the soul inspired by the spectacle of the seemingly beautiful". "Longinus", too, regards it as a process of the spirit, the outcome of an imaginative stimulus derived from earlier works of genius. And according to Quintilian, imitation alone was not enough; it was merely a means to further artistic advance, an incentive to the creation of new forms and effects. This much then is clear, that classicism in the beginning was nobly conceived. It was a doctrine that set before men the highest artistic standards; and so far from involving a stereotyping of literature, it insisted on the need for original effort, and for the development of something new in the literary sphere.

At the same time the theory was not without its inherent disabilities, disabilities in the first place that were inevitable in any attempt at systematisation. However conscious its first adherents were of the spiritual side of art, their animating purpose was nevertheless in danger of being frustrated by the routine of ideas, by tendencies which made for conventionalised forms, and for a growing faith in mere mechanics. And when to this is added the danger of inadequate or faulty analysis, it becomes evident that the attempt, however well conceived, to enshrine the essence of Greek literature in a particular system or creed was one that could only be attended by grave risks. The spirit would more and more be stifled by the letter; and that this was the outcome of the movement in its subsequent development is a fact all too familiar in critical history. Then,

too, a fundamental error was made in the adoption of standards, however lofty, as absolute standards. And already this was being made clear by the challenge of those who wrote with other ideals in view, thus bringing about the first serious clash in the secular conflict between the Ancients and the Moderns. Already, two centuries before, Callimachus had raised the question at Alexandria; and, for the time being, success had remained with the Moderns. When, however, the matter was re-opened later on at Rome victory passed to the Ancients; their authority was made absolute, and so it was to remain right down through the ages. In the meantime, however, there were warnings in plenty against so unqualified a decision. And significant in the first place were those impelling forces known as Asianism and Alexandrianism; for with all their defects they were natural developments, literary tendencies resulting from new conditions, and the normal expression of cosmopolitan Asiatic communities. Then, too, doubts and qualifications were being voiced by Roman critics themselves, who, conscious of the need for development in literature, envisaged standards of a more relative kind. Thus before the close of the first century A.D. Tacitus had shaken faith in the infallibility of Ciceronianism. "When changes occur", he explained,¹ "we must not always conclude that it is for the worse" (*nec statim deterius esse quod diversum est*). Velleius Paterculus, again, had maintained that literature was subject to the laws of change; and he further pointed out the hopelessness and futility of imitating the inimitable. Nor were Quintilian's methods without their significance; for he rested his theorising, not on the authority of the Greeks, but rather on the dictates of nature or reason, thus working from first principles. Yet, in spite of all innovations in practice and all doubts in theory, the orthodox or classical theory was duly established; and literature for ages to come was to be restricted by the schemes and conceptions of the past. The first century A.D. was without doubt one of the decisive moments in critical history; and the treatment accorded to the "romantic" impulse at that date was a foretaste of the treatment meted out to innovations at the Renaissance.

¹ *Dial.* c. 18.

But while the capital error of antiquity was perhaps this failure to recognise fully the relativity of literary standards, at the same time there is much in that early criticism that is of first-rate importance, much too that has a bearing on literature in all the ages. And to realise this fact we must forget for the time being the truncated and attenuated form of the classical tradition at the Renaissance, as well as the misunderstandings of its leading advocates at that date. By those critics, for instance, "imitation" was often interpreted in a mechanical sense; the "universal" was confounded with the "general", and the law of "probability" was turned into a narrow *vraisemblance*. What moreover was valuable in the ancient theories and methods, their inductive processes for instance, their concern with psychological and historical factors, all this passed unheeded; and in its place was substituted a formal and dogmatic treatment, which was based in the main on classifications and rules, the "kinds", the unities, decorum, Figures, and the like. The truth in short was that classical doctrine was never really assimilated by Renaissance scholars. As Tacitus in one place puts it: "the use we make of what belongs to ourselves is quite different from the use we make of what we take on loan";¹ and the ancient teaching at the Renaissance remained for the most part a mere borrowing, worlds removed from the characteristic doctrines set forth in antiquity.

Of the positive value of that ancient teaching on the other hand there can be no doubt. It is not too much to say that in it are present the seeds of many of our ideas concerning literature, and that its scope embraces practically the whole of the literary art. The essential truth of poetry, for instance, its element of illusion and its uplifting effects, all these things emerge plainly from the discussions in antiquity. And at the same time the evolution of poetry was traced; its psychological basis was analysed; while hints were also thrown out as to the influence of environment and the spirit of the age upon literary effort in general. Equally significant, however, were the comments on the poetic art. And not least important was the formulation of a technique for both drama and epic,

¹ *Dial. c. 32* (tr. Peterson).

upon which later ages have built; or again, the statement that the final verdict in art rests not with individuals or coteries but with the relentless judgment of time. Then, too, guiding principles were enunciated which no age can outgrow. For perfect achievement in art, we learn, natural gifts of genius are needed, as well as a sustained effort of reflexion; though at the same time a reminder is given that the best things come by accident in art. Or again, the supreme quality in a poem is said to be its completeness, its unity of effect; form in general is held to be determined by function; while originality is described as an affair of manner, not matter. Nor are the injunctions given on matters of prose style any less fundamental; first, the necessity of having something to say, then the need for its effective arrangement, and its clear and persuasive utterance—in these are comprised the basic elements of a theory of style. And equally suggestive are the further hints given concerning the manner of utterance; that style is the order and movement we introduce into our thought, that it naturally and inevitably reflects the mind of the writer, and that since words and phrases are the symbols of living thought and emotions, changes in style are from time to time to be expected. Nor must we forget the truths set forth in connexion with words themselves, the media of all literary expression, whether in verse or prose. From the ancients we learn of their inherent beauty, their music, their colour, their rhythmical effects, as well as of the new magic won by a skilful setting. Throughout antiquity the main effort was devoted to showing that prose was an art, not spontaneous expression; and not the least of the ancient doctrines is that which maintained that ordinary words were the stuff out of which great literature was made.

In such doctrines as these, it is plain, there is material of lasting value, truths applicable to the literature of all the ages. And the same must be said of the essential and governing doctrine of antiquity; that theory of classicism which maintained the existence of certain authoritative principles based on the highest artistic ideals then known, and available as guides in literary matters. For this and no other is the primary meaning of classicism, despite the many different interpreta-

tions given latterly to that term as opposed to romanticism. And in upholding this doctrine, in giving assurance of the existence of positive and objective literary standards, antiquity rendered not the least of services to later ages. It is true that in modern times objections have been raised to this doctrine; in the first place on the score of the limitations of the theory as expounded in antiquity. Based as that teaching was on a single literature, the principles thus evolved were held to have only a local significance, and to be therefore inapplicable to literature in general. And such objections, it must be conceded, are soundly based; the principles of classical antiquity are not necessarily binding on literature in all ages and places. Yet while they are not the whole truth, they nevertheless stand for truth, and for truth of a permanent kind. Thus the qualities of clearness, restraint, harmony in construction, economy of means, simplicity, and the like, these remain for all time ideals acceptable in literature; and the emergence of alien qualities, born of other ways of thinking and feeling, cannot dispose of the fact that these others are among the authoritative principles of literature. Then, too, there is the further objection voiced in recent times, which denies *in toto* the existence of unquestioned authority in literary matters. Classicism, in particular, is said to be alien to the English genius, which in matters of art recognises no outside authority as opposed to the inner man; so that there are claimed to be as many systems of aesthetics as there are individual artists. But this is tantamount to saying that literature is mere spontaneous expression and no art; and that aesthetic laws are determined solely by the genius or whim of the individual. Yet in all literary activity there are at least two factors, apart from the individuality of the writer, which have to be taken into account. They are the medium of words and that human nature to which appeal is made; and it is with these matters that the doctrine of classicism is concerned, and upon which are based the authoritative principles bound up with the literary art. The truth, in short, is that classicism in its widest and truest sense is not limited to the teaching of antiquity. It is a body of principles based on the ideals implicit in the best literature, modern as well as ancient; and if the

formulation of that larger classicism is a task that has yet to be undertaken, its possibility and its potentialities nevertheless cannot reasonably be denied. Authority, indeed, is a necessary preliminary towards obtaining perfect freedom; and the ancients in their literary criticism were the first to realise the profound significance of this truth.

Nor is the classicism as formulated in antiquity without its meaning for modern ages; though at first sight it has much that is irrelevant, if not contrary, to our modern notions. No poet, it may be granted, ever became great by thinking of the alternation of his vowels; and to regard literature as an affair of classifications and rules is an attitude inconceivable at the present day. Furthermore it must be conceded that every nation, every age, has its own attitude to art, its own creative turn; so that the ancient doctrines and methods, which already by the end of the first century A.D. had shown signs of exhaustion, can never again wholly satisfy the artistic needs of man. Yet as germinal forces the critical ideas of the ancient world are still potent; they can still be a leavening influence in modern activities. It is well, for instance, to be reminded that art is a worthy aim of the noblest efforts of human activity; that greatness in literature comes through limitation and restraint; or that half the secret of the charm of poetry lies in the art which suggests but does not say. Or again, it may be, our attention is recalled to the beauty that resides in form, to the symmetry, the poise, and dignity that result from a nice calculation of details, to the simplicity again that looks so easy and yet is so hard to come by, to a thousand and one devices all artfully concealed, and above all to the convincing effects of an unflinching tact or sense of fitness. These are among the things that no artist can afford to forget; though the English genius with its naturally "romantic" bias, inclines rather to utterance of an unstudied kind than to effects that result from taking thought. And never probably has the steadying influence of antiquity been more needed than it is to-day, when amid the bewilderment of new aims, new methods and standards, the one point of common agreement is the revolt against all conventions in art. The results are seen in the eccentricities,

the disharmonies that prevail; in the unflagging efforts after a capricious and assertive self-expression; and in the attempts at rendering all things new and most things violent in art. To an age perplexed antiquity comes with its teaching of other things. It suggests that art is a blend of both representation and expression; that its true ends are attained when there is a balance of free creation and control; and further, that its appeal is directed neither to an individual nor to an age but to something elemental and universal in man. And in these ideas and counsels are summed up not the least of the findings of antiquity. They are the considered judgments of sane and fastidious critics; and in art, as in life, it is the part of wisdom to let the ages instruct the years.

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